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YES AND NO.

VOL. I.

Lately Published, by the same Author,

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MATILDA :—A TALE OF THE DAY.

THE FOURTH EDITION.

“ Blush I not ?
Can you not read my fault writ in my cheek ?
Is not my crime there ?”

YES AND NO:

A TALE OF THE DAY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "MATILDA."

*Norromanteg, Constance, the
Philip*

Che sì e no nel capo mi tenzona.

DANTE.

At war 'twixt *will* and *will not*.

SHAKSPEARE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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PREFACE.

THERE are two different charges to which the Author of a work like the following may expect to be subject—either that he has copied too closely from other fictions, or that he has sketched too pointedly from individual nature. To one of these he may inadvertently have rendered himself liable by seeing much of men; to the other, by reading little of novels.

To the accusation of plagiarism, if urged, the Author can only plead the conscious innocence of any such intention: to the imputa-

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tion of personality, unless well supported, he would be unwilling to attempt a serious answer; fearing that, in so doing, he might justly be charged with "the puff indirect," in supposing his characters so well drawn, as to convey to any one the notion of individual identity. But for this, however, he could most sincerely protest, that he is not aware of any intentional resemblance in any one character or passage.

It would be certainly flattering if the reader of a work like this should leave it with a general impression, that similar persons in such circumstances, either have, or would have acted in a similar manner; but the Author is in this instance no more conscious that they have done so already, than that they will do so hereafter; and has just as much intention to be prophetic as to be personal.

The writer of the following pages owns, with gratitude, that the unexpected favour shown to his former little production, was the parent of the present; but he is aware, at the same time, that this is not a birth to boast of—that popularity is no inheritance; but, on the contrary, as was once said by perhaps the only living writer who never could have had occasion to apply it to himself: “The public will expect the new work to be ten times better than its predecessor; the author will expect that it should be ten times more popular; and it is a hundred to ten that both are disappointed.” This is no doubt generally true; and one may at least imitate, in the humility of one’s anticipations, him who is, in every other respect, inimitable.

YES AND NO.

CHAPTER I.

From infancy
They have convers'd, and spent their hours together;
And though the one hath been an idle truant,
Omitting the sweet benefit of time;

Yet hath the other
Made use and fair advantage of his days.
His years are young, but his experience old;
His head unmellow'd, but his judgment ripe;
He is complete in feature and in mind,
With all good grace, to grace a gentleman.

SHAKSPEARE.

“ AND bring wax candles,” said the tallest and apparently the youngest of the two travellers, who had just alighted from that almost obsolete mode of conveyance, a hack post-chaise, at the

door of a small but celebrated country inn, on one of the great posting roads of England.

There was nothing in the mode of this arrival which had called for particular care of the new-comers from any of the busy inmates of the inn, nor had it therefore broken in upon their regular routine of bustling inattention.

One of the travellers had thrown himself upon a most uninviting sofa, and if his present position could for a moment have been mistaken for repose, it afforded the most conclusive evidence of the dislocating discomforts of the hack chaise, after which it was considered a welcome change.

His companion, (the tall gentleman mentioned above,) continued pacing the small apartment to stretch his legs, an unnecessary task, as, compass-like, two strides measured its limits backwards and forwards.

Upon the next appearance of a waiter, loaded with writing-boxes, dressing-cases, &c., he re-

peated his former order in a more authoritative tone—"Take away these," (with a contemptuous intonation,) "and bring wax candles." This order evidently excited the attention of the waiter towards him who gave it; the idea of a hack post-chaise being generally connected in the mind of the knight of the napkin with such gregarious animals as little boys going to school with a single guinea for pocket-money, or briefless barristers going the circuit without the remotest hope even of that single guinea. Hastening to execute the first part of the command, the scrutiny which he still continued of him from whom he received it, prevented that perpendicular precision which could alone render the removal of the culprit "mutton-fats" perfectly inoffensive. And "Boots," laden with portmanteaus and travelling-bags, meeting them on the threshold of the door, the gentle zephyrs by which he was accompanied, caused their

sudden extinction, and carried back their odour as far as the upturned nostrils of the gentleman on the sofa, who had hitherto taken no part in the arrangement.

“ So like you, Germain !” he exclaimed, as he started up.

“ What’s like me,” replied the other, laughing, “ an awkward waiter, or a nasty smell ?”

“ No—that restless vanity which gives you such an unhealthy craving for the good word of all alike who cross your path, however unimportant or worthless their opinion may be. You could not bear that even in an inn, you should be confounded with the common herd, and were impatient to buy distinction at the price of a pair of wax candles. This is what is so like you—‘ seeking the bubble reputation even in a *waiter’s* mouth.’ ”

This tirade was borne by the other with an imperturbable placidity, which habitual expe-

rience of the like must have joined with constitutional good-humour to produce.

“ My dear Oakley,” he replied, “ do for once drop the cynic this last night; remember, though constant fellowship has given you the right to say whatever you please to me, that our complete separation is about to take away your power of doing so—and I would fain hope that some little regret at what the future will deprive you of, might soften the exercise of the privilege the past has given you.”

He paused a moment; and Oakley, who really liked him better than any one else in the world, seeming silenced by this appeal, and not showing any inclination to resume his attack, Germain continued :—

“ Besides, I really don’t see how the no very uncommon peculiarity of preferring wax candles to tallow, should subject one to have one’s whole character dissected.”

“ Germain,” resumed Oakley, quietly, but almost solemnly, “ you have alluded to our long fellowship through boyhood and youth : you are right in having done so, for the kindly feelings which that has ripened, will, I trust, long survive our present separation ; when, had it been the kindred ties of cousinship alone which coupled our names, the black coat on the back of the one, for the death of the other, would probably have first reminded the survivor that the deceased had ever existed. For as different as our characters, are likely to be our pursuits. Indeed, so strange to me seem all professions of regard, that I may as well resume a tone of reproof, or you will already be unable to recognise your old friend. But call it by what name you like, it is sincere regard for you which induces me to tell you, once again, Germain, that you have a most unhappy facility of character which will lead you to spend your

fortune in acquiring things you don't want, and waste your time in doing things you don't like; and that, in over anxiety for other people's approbation, you will soon forfeit your own."

" However I may feel convinced I am in the right, I never could get the better of the argument with you: perhaps that very quality which you call facility, (meaning weakness,) and which I call candour, predisposes me whilst I am listening to you, to acknowledge there is some truth in what you are saying, and your firmness of character which some might mistake for obstinacy, prevents your ever yielding a tittle. But I will put it fairly to you, whether any one would have supposed the sentiments you have just uttered, to be those of a young man of one-and-twenty, and whether you think it was any advantage at that age to have acquired the character you did last month at Paris, where, as we were always seen to-

gether, they compared us to English summer weather. I was the smiling sunshiny morning, and you were the cold cloudy evening that followed."

"There," interrupted Oakley, "that is what I complain of: it is never your own opinion upon any subject. What people said at Paris you repeat. But that can make no impression upon me, though it is all in confirmation of my argument that it does but too much upon you." And as he said this, he began stirring the fire violently, perhaps instinctively, at the mention of an English summer's evening, for it was the 10th of August, and the weather was truly national.

"There," said Germain, "as you have interrupted me, I must interrupt you. Look! you have put out the fire with your violence; that is what I complain that you do in society, which you enter, as stiff and as cold as a poker, and

attempt to carry all by storm. Now I should have insinuated myself gently, and have soon been received with reviving warmth, and partaken of its influence. Much as you know, you have yet to learn the magic of manner."

"The gilding that makes falsehood and folly pass current," muttered Oakley, as the entrance of the landlady herself with the first dish prevented further reply. This unusual condescension on the part of the portly dame towards travellers in a chatter-box, (as a post-chaise is denominated by its familiars,) was entirely produced by that order of Germain's which had originated the late discussion between himself and his friend. They had at first been considered as common-place guests, every-day sort of customers, but the wax candles threw a new light upon their characters; and as soon as it was promulgated in the bar that the gentlemen in "*the Sun*" had asked for wax lights, then

the possibility that they might be greater men than had been at first supposed, seemed to break at once on the whole establishment. The landlady, even at the sacrifice of her *papillottes*, prepared to head the enlivening procession. The landlord looked out for one of the illegitimate offspring, born of the clandestine connexion of sloe-juice and raspberry vinegar, in hopes that claret would next be asked for, and the waiter prepared to throw away a random shot or two of "my Lord," and "your Lordship," which he thought could do no harm, whether they hit the right mark or not. The visits of the landlord and landlady were "few and far between," and could not be felt as interruptions, but the waiter seemed determined, if possible, to gratify his curiosity at the expense of the patience of its objects. Nothing could get him out of the room.

In the mean time, our travellers found occu-

pation enough before them to prevent their unbroken silence from being irksome. But when in despair at their taciturnity, the waiter at length took his leave, Germain broke out.

“ It may be your taste to go through life as if every man’s hand was against you, and yours equally against every man ; but I don’t see how it can ever be a reproach to any one to be able hereafter to say, ‘ I have bought golden opinions from all sorts of people.’ ”

“ What an accidentally apt quotation ! ” retorted Oakley. “ You may well say ‘ golden ’ opinions, for yours are bought, and that with gold. It is such golden opinions that will continue to procure for you attachment like that of Mademoiselle Zephyrine, friendship like that of Monsieur Partout.”

Towards the conclusion of Oakley’s last sentence, the waiter had returned with a second instalment of mutton chops, followed by an

assistant with the reserve of mashed potatoes.

“ Hush—hush !” interrupted Germain, who had particular reasons for not wishing the point last mentioned to be argued in open court.

The fact alluded to was this :—Every one knows that there is always a “ rage” at Paris, and this—be it hero or man-monkey—book or bonnet—singer or monster—supersedes in its ephemeral existence every other object of attraction. This rage of the moment when Germain first went to Paris was Mademoiselle Zephyrine, *première danseuse* at the Grand Opéra. The list of her admirers comprised all, and every degree. As was once said or sung by a witty friend of mine of a celebrated English actress,

“ Her flowing curls entangled earls,
Her auncles county members.”

It was absolutely necessary for every one who had any pretensions to taste, to be to a certain

point in love with her; but Germain, who was always very susceptible, passed this certain point, and committed, accordingly, manifold follies.

At this time, however, a useful and ornamental acquaintance of his, Monsieur Partout, came to his assistance. This convenient friend had previously endeavoured to initiate him into the mysteries of the *Salon*, at appreciating the charms of which he had found him rather slow, and he now came to communicate the pleasing intelligence that Zephyrine admired his “main-tien” and “air noble,” that she had quite a *sentiment* for him, in short, that she preferred him decidedly to all her other admirers. It never occurred to Germain that any part of that decided preference could be at all attributed to the very handsome settlement obscurely hinted at by Partout, and immediately executed by him; till the illusion was dispersed by hearing,

one fine morning, that this *fidus Achates*, this faithful friend, had gone bodkin between settlement and sentiment in a *chaise de poste* on a provincial professional trip to Bordeaux. His vanity had been deeply wounded by the ridicule of the whole transaction—it had hastened his departure from Paris, and any allusion to it was still disagreeable.

Oakley and Germain had been (as indeed they have stated for themselves) educated almost like brothers. They were both orphans, and related on the female side, their mothers having been sisters. Germain had inherited an ample, if not splendid, paternal property. Oakley had very great expectations from a maternal uncle; his mother (who had made an imprudent match) being the elder sister of the two. His present destination was to answer the first summons of his uncle to visit him. He and Germain had

just returned from a continental tour, had dropped carriages and couriers at Calais, and it being the dead time of year in London, had passed through that smoky wilderness without stopping. Germain had resisted Oakley's request that he would accompany him to their joint uncle, partly because the old gentleman, whom he had never seen, had the reputation of being a gloomy recluse, and no one had a more instinctive horror than Germain of putting himself in a situation to be bored; and partly because he could not bear the appearance of interfering with what had always been considered as Oakley's expectations in that quarter: and as the character of this unknown uncle was notoriously capricious, there was no telling what fancies he might take if his two nephews presented themselves together.

Germain's present intention therefore was to

take the opportunity of paying a visit to an old private tutor of his, Mr. Dormer, who lived at a pretty pastoral parsonage, about fifty miles from the spot where he and his friend were about to separate.

It was with this person, and at this parsonage, that he had passed almost the only period during his education, that he had been divided from Oakley. For when they both left school, he not being considered steady enough to be trusted at college so soon as his friend, had therefore been sent to this intermediate purgatory, as at the time he called it—yet afterwards, he found his time pass pleasantly enough there ; and whilst he gave to Oakley, as a reason for his visit, that “ it was a proper attention to the best old fellow in the world,” there came into his calculations of the expediency of it, certain recollections of one Fanny Dormer, whose unbounded admira-

tion of him, during his stay there, had been by no means unwelcome, and had called for a return in kind from him. In short, when he went away, he had felt as if actually in love—and though the time that had intervened, and other impressions which had interposed, had occasionally caused him a little to doubt, upon recollecting some of the boyish couplets in which he used to celebrate her charms, whether there might not be almost as much imagination in the facts, as poetry in the metre, yet the thought of seeing her again caused a pleasing sensation as he called to mind the cheerful eye, the fresh fair skin, and the frequent display of the most brilliantly white teeth in the world, which followed the ever-ready laugh at the worst of his jokes. And when the friends separated for the night, though the ample justice done to the late supper might have been supposed likely to make

disagreeable impressions survive upon a restless pillow, yet it was upon the fancied form, not of Mademoiselle Zephyrine, but of Fanny Dormer, that his eyes closed, as he slowly dropped asleep.

CHAPTER II.

There's no art
To find the mind's construction in the face :
He was a gentleman on whom I built
An absolute trust.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE next morning, having despatched an early breakfast, our travellers were becoming rather impatient at the slowness of the progress of the preparations making for their separate departures, when these preparations were suddenly interrupted by an arrival which at once engrossed the attention of the whole establishment, and in a moment collected from hole and

corner every one, from the Landlady down to Boots.

It was a post-chaise and four which came clattering up to the door; and the sudden jerk with which it stopped, and the loud cry of “first and second turn out,” which followed, rousing its slumbering burden, caused him to raise himself from his *Dormeuse*. Germain recognised the well-known Frederick Fitzalbert, whose acquaintance he had made last winter at Paris. The recognition was speedy and mutual.

“ Ah! Germain, my dear fellow,” said Fitzalbert, rubbing his eyes and giving a portentous yawn, “ how goes it? What, you too, I suppose, have been dreaming of to-morrow?”

Germain, to whom to-morrow conveyed no distinct idea, and who had been dreaming of nothing at all, (except, perhaps, a little of Fanny Dormer,) was rather at a loss for a reply. But Fitzalbert soon enlightened him by continuing—

“ Latimer has lent me Peatburn Lodge, and I am to have his moors all to myself—Where are you going to?”

“ Why, as I am but just returned from Paris, I have not been able to make any arrangements, and therefore I have not——” stammered Germain, struggling in vain against a sense of shame at not having any moors to shoot upon; when five minutes before, he would as soon have repined at not having the mines of Golconda.

Fitzalbert was one of those whose good word was conceived at once to confer fame in the world of fashion. He had taken a great fancy to Germain at Paris, and in the course of their acquaintance had much amused him with his ever-ready turn for quizzing, the recollection of which talent, however Germain had enjoyed it when applied to others, had left a feeling of fear lest it should be exercised against himself.

“ I have not got any moors,” he therefore reluctantly acknowledged.

“ You had much better come with me then, my dear fellow,” said Fitzalbert; “ you shall have a separate beat and a separate bed, and for the rest of the four-and-twenty hours I shall be delighted with your company.”

“ I should like it very much,” said Germain, “ but I have engaged myself——”

The Rev. Mr. Dormer and Rosedale Rectory were on the threshold of his lips, but he checked himself; for though the mere fact of paying a visit to an old parson might only be reckoned a twaddle, yet he could not bear the idea of the cross-examination which might follow; and it seemed little less than suicide, to run the chance of offering to his satirical friend such a fund for ridicule as “ pastoral parsonage,” “ private tutor,” “ pretty daughter,” and “ first love,” compared to which fair game, the loan even of

Lord Latimer's moors, abundant as they might prove, would afford but poor promise of sport. He therefore left that sentence unfinished, and replied instead ; “ But I have neither gun nor shooting dress with me.”

“ Oh ! as for that,” said Fitzalbert, “ I have four guns with me—a Joe, a John, and two Eggs, from which I choose according as I feel in the morning. You may always have any one of the other three ; and as to shooting costume, I believe I have got with me all the different dresses of the last five years, most of which have never been worn.”

It need hardly be added, that the end of all this was, that Germain was persuaded to alter his destination, and to accompany Fitzalbert to Peatburn Lodge.

“ Then, instead of sleeping over another stage,” said Fitzalbert, “ I will dress here, and be ready for you in a few minutes.—Here,

Le Clair, take out all this lumber, and make room for Mr. Germain," added he, opprobriously shovelling out new publications by the dozen, which had hitherto slept quietly, side by side with him, and were now discarded with leaves as yet uncut, and the stiffness of still unbroken boards.

"And what am I to do with all these?" asked Le Clair.

"Leave them here, to be sure; let the chambermaids study sentiment from the novels, and the post-boys learn geography from the travels—they will have found their proper level at last. But," added he to Germain, "who is that with you?"

"Oakley; you must remember him at Paris."

"What, still inseparable! Have you not got quit of him yet? Well, my Frankenstein, I must rid you of *Le Monstre*, as we used to call him."

When Germain went to take leave of Oakley, and to announce to him that he was going grouse-shooting with Fitzalbert—"Grouse-shooting?" asked Oakley;—"well, remember that Fitzalbert is sometimes supposed a—a pretty good long shot at a pigeon, that's all."

Before Germain could reply, it was announced that Fitzalbert was ready, and the cousins took a hasty leave of each other; for though there was an end of their companionship, yet as they had purposed shortly to meet in London, they did not consider this separation as final.

Fitzalbert was one of the best specimens of that sect whose whole soul is centered in self; for, after having well weighed and duly considered the question in all its bearings, provided he was perfectly convinced that no possible inconvenience could arise to himself, he would rather do a good-natured thing than not. And he was even supposed to have derived real

satisfaction from the pleasure his doing so gave to others. But most of his actions originated in more compound calculations ; for as his objects were never on a grand scale, his acute and calculating character would enable him to foresee advantages to himself from trifles, which a more enlarged mind or a more careless disposition would alike have overlooked. Whether it was from the successful exertion of these qualities, or from some other cause, he was one of those phenomena which puzzle the world,—a man who, without any visible means of subsistence, always continued in the enjoyment of every luxury, whilst distress and ruin were constantly assailing his more wealthy companions. He was constitutionally good-humoured, and he had such a happy knack in conversation, that though he never spared an absent friend, the attack seemed at once unintentional and irresistible—he liked him even whilst he lashed.

He could expose his most secret follies with an air of regard, and if the object of the general laugh he had just raised had entered the room at the moment, every one would rather have expected him to join in the jest than to resent it. All his qualities, as an agreeable member of society, were crowned by an easy off-hand manner, which most people avowedly (and probably all) really prefer to the Grandison, Gold-Stick sort of address.

There were many reasons which induced him to take up Germain: first, his society was welcome, as that of a cheerful, agreeable, good-humoured fellow, who, he observed with pleasure, had a great respect for him. In the next place, Germain's fortune, connexions, and personal qualifications, were such as to entitle him to make a great figure in the world when he should come out; and Fitzalbert had experience enough of the world to know that there

is an awkward period, when a young man is not quite fledged, when a little attention goes a great way, and is afterwards gratefully remembered. Then perhaps (for it was by no means a trifle beneath his consideration,) he easily perceived that Germain was not much of a sportsman ; and as he was going to shoot principally *for book*, and to boast of it afterwards, he had no objection to a foil.

Fitzalbert was in high spirits, and as well inclined to be amusing, as Germain was to be amused. The journey was therefore agreeable to both parties, though of the topics chosen by Fitzalbert, some might in less skilful hands have been tiresome, and others offensive.

He expatiated, in the first place, at very considerable length, upon the peculiar merits of every thing about or belonging to himself,— his carriage, his dogs, and his dress ; from this, by an easy transition, he became inquisi-

tive about Germain's private concerns, and those too of a more important description, such as his fortune, his prospects, future plans, &c. But the manner in which he handled these subjects made even his egotism interesting, and gave an appearance of friendly concern to his idle curiosity. These topics being at length exhausted, it was natural that, as they approached Peatburn Lodge, Lord and Lady Latimer should be brought upon the tapis. Of them Germain (who, it must be recollected, was not fairly launched into the world) had only heard just enough to make him wish to hear more.

“ I must take the very first opportunity to make you acquainted with the Latimers,” said Fitzalbert. “ Latimer,” continued he, “ to ninety-nine men in a hundred, would seem one of themselves—that is, he drives a *cab* down the same streets, and sits in the same club-window—but he has, or rather had, qualities of

a higher order. His talents are rusted by indolence, and his principles warped by prejudice. It is his misfortune to combine with a naturally generous disposition, an irresistible inclination to be sharp and knowing, which he has acquired in the world. He would lend a friend a thousand pounds, and *do* him out of ten of it. He would give all he has, and take all he can get—an exchange by no means advantageous ; and as he himself boasts of his littlenesses, and no one is equally busy in telling of his liberality, the balance in coin and character is against him ; and all this for want of some adequate employment for an active mind.”

“ And Lady Latimer ?” interrupted Germain, to whom this portrait of her lord did not appear particularly attractive.

“ Oh, I cannot attempt to describe her, either in person or character ; only by way of warning, don’t fall in love with her.”

“Who was she?” asked Germain, adopting the regular routine of inquiry upon such occasions.

“A Sydenham—Lady Louisa Sydenham. She and Latimer came out the same year, and were both very much admired. In short, they were the talk of the hour. I believe it bored them always to hear their names coupled, and so they married,—a very effectual expedient, for no one *now* ever mentions them together.”

“Let me see,” said his companion, “Sydenham—then she was a daughter of Lady Flamborough.”

“Yes,” rejoined Fitzalbert, “her first and hitherto only successful speculation. If anything could have warned off Latimer, it would have been the dread of Lady Flamborough’s manœuvring. As for Caroline and Jane, I should be sorry to prophesy their fate, pretty

girls as they are. By the bye, suppose, after all, she was to catch you? You are rather sentimental, I think, and I foresee she will certainly make a dead set at it."

There was something in the tone in which this was said, too nearly approaching to banter, to be perfectly pleasing to Germain. The idea, too, of being "*caught*," was in itself not flattering, and, after all, made it more mortifying. He could not help looking a little disgusted, which being perceived by Fitzalbert, who had no wish to produce any such effect, he turned the conversation.

"I dined, for my sins," he resumed, "with Lady Flamborough yesterday, just before I set out. It was her first culinary attempt since the death of my Lord, and was undertaken in consequence of balls and accidental rencontres being at an end, as a desperate attempt to bring Sir Gregory Greenford to the point before they

all separate for the season. Quite a failure; I never shall forget her look of despair, when the feelings of the managing mistress of the house struggled with those of the manœuvring mother, when she perceived that the *petits pâtés*, and the *pâtés mélés* had got next each other, and that Caroline and the baronet had not."

All further discussion of the disasters of the last evening was interrupted by the deepening shades of the present bringing them to their destination.

Peatburn Lodge was situated in a deep glen in the midst of extensive moors. In front, a brook meandered through the meadow, which interposed between a small neglected flower-garden, and the steep banks of the heather-topped hills, the sides of which were scantily clothed with a straggling fir plantation. There was no attempt at a pleasure-ground, for the

twenty yards of gravel road that led from the gate of the garden, to the front door, had been carefully raked and rolled for their arrival. The house was small, and though it had some distinguishing marks of a gentleman's residence, yet it seemed as if it had been promoted from the ranks, and had at some time been a *bonâ fide* cottage.

The whole scene was one, the impression of which must have depended upon the state of the spirits when it was visited. But at present the sun was setting brilliantly, and gave a gaiety to all around, as stepping from their carriages, Germain and Fitzalbert strolled through the long grass which divided the weed-grown plots of the flower-garden, where various rare plants were growing wild, and left to themselves to struggle with briars and brambles for their existence.

“ These were Lady Latimer’s handy work the year she was married,” said Fitzalbert.

“ Latimer has not seen her since. You probably never heard of an old savage who lives not far from here, Lord Rockington ?”

“ Only my uncle,” said Germain.

“ True ; so he is—but never mind, uncles I reckon fair game ; but as I was saying, Latimer had a law-suit with your uncle about boundaries, and was cast wrongfully, as he says ; and though this new limitation was twenty miles off, he said he would as soon shoot fowls in a farm-yard, as come here to be cramped and confined. They talk of the deadly feuds of wild Indians, but for genuine unconquerable hatred, give me country neighbours in this Christian country.”

A plain but ample supper, provided by the gamekeeper’s wife, was here a welcome inter-

ruption; and by the help of a most minute examination and trial of all the four guns, they contrived to get through the rest of the evening.

CHAPTER III.

— — — — — Wilt thou hunt ?

The hounds shall make the welkin answer them,
And fetch shrill echoes from the hollow earth.

SHAKSPEARE.

“ WHAT sort of a morning ? ” said Fitzalbert to Le Clair, as he entered his room at six, the prescribed hour.

“ Fine, only rather thick—a sort of fog,” was the reply.

“ Ay—only heat, it will be a broiling day ; so, call Mr. Germain immediately.”

“ Now for it,” said Fitzalbert, rising from the breakfast table, and walking towards the window; “ why it can’t mean to rain !” he added, in a tone of mingled astonishment and reproach.

But *it* certainly did mean to rain ; and any suspense on the subject that it might have maintained was thrown aside, now that it had them perfectly equipped, completely break-fasted, and utterly resourceless at this early hour.

Nor was this the worst ; rain alone, if light, might be braved, if heavy, could not last ; but it had now acquired a most formidable auxiliary.

“ The sort of fog,” from which Fitzalbert’s sanguine expectations had anticipated heat, had already, when they came to the window, enveloped the heather-topped hill opposite. Slowly descending, it wound about the straggling fir plantation ; still thickening as it ad-

vanced, it gave a gigantic appearance to the cattle browsing on the lower pastures, as for a while they were still indistinctly seen—then Lady Latimer's neglected exotics looked more than ever unhappy under its influence ; at last, even these were completely obscured, and not an object could be distinguished beyond the fresh marks left by their own recent arrival on the otherwise unbroken surface of the gravel road. Each wheel track was soon a running stream, and every hoof-mark contained water enough to reflect the pattering rain.

Fitzalbert had watched the progress of the storm with a whistle, which Germain was too observant to mistake for indifference, and though he did not care so much for the disappointment himself, yet as he could suggest no adequate topic of consolation, he prudently said nothing.

“ Pleasant !” was all that Fitzalbert at length

exclaimed, but no word, or words, could have conveyed so much as the look which he alternately cast at an old-fashioned clock which had yet to strike seven, and at the dilapidations of the breakfast-table, which shewed that even that resource was numbered with the things that were past.

The horror of this situation was increased by learning, from the most weather-wise of the local authorities, that this was what was called in that part of the country a Sea-fret; and that its usual duration was three days. Lord Latimer's limits were even more circumscribed by the German Ocean on one side, than they were by Lord Rockington on the other; and his marine majesty sometimes proved, as on the present occasion, the most encroaching and intrusive neighbour of the two. It is no drawback upon Fitzalbert's general estimation of his friend, that as he looked round at the book-

shelves, he regretted at the moment that he had exchanged for him those discarded tomes of which he had spoken so slightly—and he would gladly have wished him away, to have had the dullest of the productions of the day, the weakest literary bantling that ever dragged out a few weeks' existence, “dieted on praises, sauced with lies.” The few apartments were soon ransacked for resources, but without success. In Lady Latimer's they found a piano-forte, some netting-needles, and a paint-box,—all equally satisfactory! Some neatly bound volumes were seized with avidity, but, alas! they turned out to contain only manuscript music, and water-coloured drawings. In the course of their search, they stumbled into the old gamekeeper's own room; here they did find one book between them—it was about half “*The Whole Duty of Man*,” with the first and last leaves torn out, probably for wadding.

“ By the bye,” exclaimed Fitzalbert, his noble countenance lighting up, evidently with a bright thought, “ I wonder whether they have any cards in the house ; let’s send for old Coverdale, and ask.”

Old Coverdale had been gamekeeper in Lord Latimer’s father’s time, but as the present Lord had always brought all his shooting establishment from Latimer, he had (though somewhat superannuated) continued him for his negative qualities ; for though he could no longer shoot much himself, he would not let any one else shoot at all. Fitzalbert too, having sent his own man with his dogs, was independent of the veteran’s somewhat rheumatic assistance.

“ Are there any cards in the house ?” asked Fitzalbert, as old Coverdale hobbled in.

“ Na’, there not loik,” growled out the old man, who had grown a little Methodistical in

his solitude, and had therefore a horror of such abominations.

“ But could not you get us a pack ?”

“ Why, any thing in loife for you, gentlemen ; but the gamest shop to find them is Jenimy Macpherson, at Boggleby-Moorside : that’s a matter of sax miles, and Smoiler ’ll be matched to get there to-day, for he an so canny on his legs as might be, and the road’s a webit stony ; a power of steep bank-sides—and Jemmy, I doubt, will na ha’ gitten his winter stock of any thing till the first October carrier—neither cards, nor yet flannel,” added he, casting a rueful look *at* the window, not out of it, for that was no longer possible ; and thinking, no doubt, that going for one in such weather would render the other necessary.

This last statement, which showed that Jemmy Macpherson was more famous for the variety of his goods, than for the extent of his stock,

prevented their proposing to send any other messenger.

“ May be you may foind some’at to whoile away the toime in yon cupboard,” said he, opening a closet-door which they had not yet perceived.

“ Soho!” exclaimed Fitzalbert, as he prepared to drag out from under a load of lumber a backgammon-board. “ Well! we shall at least have a little chicken-hazard.”

A backgammon-board it certainly was: that it only contained a skeleton regiment of men, signified not for their present purpose. Dice they luckily found, but no box.

“ This will be the very thing,” said Fitzalbert, taking one of a row of old Sèvre’s coffee-cups, which Mrs. Coverdale had arranged on the shelf above; and with this ingenious substitute they set to work, and played for some hours.

“ Seven’s the main !” was alternately shouted, with varying fortunes, and increasing stakes, till at the end of the time, Germain rose a winner of four hundred pounds.

“ Pigeon-shooting,” thought he, “ I wish Oakley was here ;” and from this moment he had caught the infectious love of play.

Fitzalbert did not in any way show the slightest annoyance at the result. To be sure, towards the end of the time, he broke six of the coffee-cups, but that was very probably an accidental contingency. He seemed in much higher spirits than he had been, and the next morning was rewarded by the weather completely relenting, in spite of the saying. He never shot better in his life, brought home forty-five brace, and was not a little gratified at Germain only having attained a tithe of his performances.

On the next day, the weather, though not decidedly bad, was rather wild and windy. He

proposed an adjournment to a neighbouring watering-place; for he probably preferred to any chance of obscuring his former brilliant achievements, the being able to say, that *in spite* of the weather, which drove him away, *the one* day he was out, he had killed forty-five brace. Germain, who had not been made more fond of shooting by finding his performances so considerably inferior to those of his friend, readily consented.

Soon after their arrival they sought the beach, which was the public promenade, and as usual, covered with those shoals of the productive classes from the inland counties, who annually become amphibious in the autumn, and instead of being pinioned between the counter and the wall, sport themselves between high and low water-mark—naked or clothed—tumbling out of bathing-machines, or donkey-carts—according to the time of tide.

Fitzalbert, part of whose system it was to affect even more than he felt of contempt for all that was not useless, as well as ornamental, exclaimed—

“A nation of shopkeepers, indeed! but heaven forefend that either cloth or cotton goods should be denied their periodical plunge into the sea; for I swear one can smell the smoke of steam-engines as they pass. Hands off, and a broad walk, is all I bargain for.”

As he said this, Germain felt himself lightly touched on the shoulder, and a woman’s voice cried out, laughingly, “Ah! we’ve caught you at last, Mr. Germain.”

Turning suddenly round, he could not be mistaken in recognising the form of Fanny Dormer. True, it was not exactly what he had recollected—the bright red and white was there, but it seemed as if the former colour had made undue inroads upon the territory of the latter.

The well-rounded form of the growing girl had, perhaps, somewhat exceeded its former promise in the full-blown woman before him. The brilliancy of the teeth remained unimpaired ; but *surely* their ample display had not been always owing to the size of the mouth.

These reflections passed rapidly through Germain's mind, and had probably their effect upon his countenance, though not perceived by Fanny, as she gaily continued—

“ Here's my father—his lumbago, which caused our coming here, would have prevented his catching you——”

“ So I despatched my Hebe after you,” interrupted a respectable looking middle-aged man, with an intelligent countenance, and a still fresh, florid face, though his nose might be accused of engrossing more than its share of the ruby, the origin of which usurpation might be convivial, but if constitutional, would

excite alarm for the future, as to the somewhat unsettled hues of Fanny's complexion.

“ How could you play the truant with your old tutor ? ” continued he ; “ when we got your letter, we delayed our departure from home, and Fanny had prepared your favourite whipped syllabub for you, for she never forgets any thing , ” added the fond father, reciprocating an affectionate glance with his dutiful daughter. “ And as you also were coming here, it would have been so handy, for you might have come bodkin with us in the chaise ; you have done so before now—do you remember Plateford races ? ”

“ And Wrangleby Sessions Ball ? ” said Fanny, her bright eyes beaming with undisguised pleasure at the recollection.

“ She never forgets any thing, indeed , ” thought Germain, with the reviving consciousness of having made rather a fool of himself upon that occasion with the rustic beauty.

“We thought it so kind of you,” rejoined the father, “to recollect your old friends immediately upon your return to England; and when we talked you over upon the receipt of your letter, Fanny said that she was afraid you would find us rather dull after all the fine people you had been living with. Why so, said I, we have not changed, and his anxiety to see us shows that he is not.”

Germain was somewhat touched at the good man’s simplicity, and not a little ashamed of being ashamed at the meeting; so he replied, almost earnestly—“But I hope you got my second letter, saying how very sorry I was that it was utterly impossible for me to fulfil my intention of visiting you.”

But though his better feelings dictated this excuse, he could not help being annoyed at Fitz-albert’s presence. The imperturbable patience with which this gentleman stood all the while,

convinced him that he was imbibing food for future ridicule ; and he feared, not without reason, that he should come in for his full share. He could not deny that Fanny's appearance afforded not a little food for the gratification of that taste.

“ She ought to have known,” thought he, “ that so small a bonnet must make her face look ten times larger—and why that bright green cloth pelisse, which looks as if it had formed part of the lining of a pew in her father's church ?”

In the pauses of the conversation, he had suspiciously watched the movement of his friend's eyes ; he observed them fixed on the ground near Miss Dormer's feet. Even in the height of his infatuation, he had occasionally had his misgivings that Fanny Dormer had not a pretty foot ; since then, his mind had been particularly enlightened on the subject by his trip to Paris,

as well as his taste formed during some of his connexions in that capital, to which allusion has been made, as to the best artificial modes of setting off that very attractive part of the person. Great was his horror therefore at seeing the exposure of yawning leather boots, on which Fitzalbert's eyes were rivetted: and taking a hasty leave of father and daughter, with a promise to call on them, he hurried away.

“Where, in the name of wonder, did you pick up those treats?” asked Fitzalbert.

“Mr. Dormer was the private tutor to whom I was condemned on leaving school,” answered Germain.

“And you consoled yourself with studying Ovid’s Art of Love,” said Fitzalbert, with a suppressed sneer.

This was the only comment he made at the time, and it was not till long afterwards that Germain discovered that no part of the fore-

going scene had lost in his hands by repetition. Little was he aware that it was his own over-evident morbid sensibility to ridicule which gave the zest to the exposure, and that a more manly indifference would have disarmed even Fitz-albert.

It would be difficult perhaps to define exactly the qualifications which insure at once, without dispute and as a matter of course, a fixed position in what is called the first society. Birth alone will not do it. Wealth not only will not succeed alone, but is not always an indispensable requisite. Neither personal appearance nor talents will be separately sufficient ; yet a fair allowance of the two combined, and a slight infusion of one or both of the other two ingredients, will go far towards establishing a claim to its fellowship. But from whatever source the consciousness of this fixed position in society is derived, it exempts a person from nothing more de-

cidedly, than from that which by some is ignorantly supposed its characteristic—a propensity to cutting a casual acquaintance, on account of his personal appearance, a weakness which arises from a false alarm that the ridicule which attaches to a quiz is catching. Such a person, secure of his own situation,—well-dressed himself, as a matter of course, not of care,—would never imagine that there could be contagion in the cut of a coat or the make of a gown, and therefore would, even in the most public place, without a moment's uneasiness, interchange common civilities with the veriest quiz that ever adorned a print-shop. But as passports are most examined in frontier towns, it is in the outskirts of fashion that those who there occupy uncertain settlements are most particular about external badges, and can see exclusive merit in their own costume, or mortal offence in that of another. It is those who dwell on what may be

called the debateable land of society, who are in most constant dread of inroads from without. It is here that slights are incessantly fancied from above, and intrusion perpetually feared from below.

But independent of the situation of society, there is an age at which fear of ridicule is epidemic. The awkward state, for instance, of having ceased to be a boy, without being universally acknowledged to be a man. From this state Germain was just emerging. This, of course, gave additional terrors to the idea of being quizzed about a private tutor, and may account for a little of the otherwise indefensible sense of shame he felt at the meeting with his former friends.

For there was much to esteem in the character of both father and daughter. Mr. Dormer was an exemplary parish priest, and a kind neighbour to the poor; and if (as he never read but

one side of any political subject, and never heard either discussed) his prejudices had somewhat strengthened in thirty years' utter seclusion, they were at least sincere, and had never served as a stepping-stone to preferment. If he seriously believed that it was the intention of half the government, and one branch of the legislature, to establish the Pope at Lambeth, it was an opinion which he shared with many who had more opportunities of knowing better. Whenever the weekly county paper promulgated the news of some fresh attack upon the church, he insisted upon drowning the design in a third bottle of port, and supporting the Protestant constitution whilst destroying his own. Yet the head-ache that followed never was known to interfere with the timely composition of the Sunday's sermon.

Fanny Dormer had not escaped the defects almost inseparable from a masculine education.

Not only she was learned, and was not accomplished, but in her slightest movement, almost in her every word, it was evident that woman's care had been wanting. In the innocence of her heart, she said all that her high spirits dictated; and in the vigour of her fine active person, she took every kind of manly exercise that youth and health prompted. The little defects in her appearance have been noted by Germain; but if it must be owned that she could not make a decent gown for herself, she made plenty of flannel-petticoats for the poor—and, whatever fault might be found with the cut of her outward garment, it still covered one of the kindest hearts that ever breathed.

From this character of Mr. and Miss Dormer, it may be expected that as Germain had now seen more of the world, he might find the one less a model for imitation—and the other, less an object of attraction than he had done; but

that he should expect to derive less instruction from the society of the father, or pleasure in the company of the daughter, was no excuse for his conduct at the meeting ; and though his facility of character, and anxiety to appear well in the world, may have done much in making him dread the ridicule of Fitzalbert, yet his youth is the best plea in his palliation. At thirty, his conduct would have been inexcusable ; for, as in the West Indies, the constant dread of the yellow fever is considered a strong symptom that it is lurking in the constitution, so an incessant fear of being thought vulgar, is a sure sign of innate and inherent vulgarity.

CHAPTER IV.

This from a dying man receive as certain:
When you are liberal of your loves and counsels
Be sure you be not loose; for those you make friends
And give your hearts to, when they once perceive
The least rub in your fortunes, fall away
Like water from ye, never found again
But where they mean to sink ye.

SHAKSPEARE.

OAKLEY was left preparing to obey the summons of his uncle, Lord Rockington, to pay him a first visit. It has been stated that he had been educated with the idea of great expectations from this quarter, but these were still uncertain, as Lord Rockington was only his uncle on the mother's side, and though he had no nearer relation, the property was entirely in

his own power. His character, too, was remarkable for singularity, and his intentions had never been formally announced.

The manner in which Oakley's attendance had now for the first time been required, was in itself strange: he had received a letter at Paris desiring him immediately to proceed to London, where he would hear further. Upon his arrival there, he found another letter, desiring him to present himself at Rockington Castle by four o'clock in the afternoon of a certain day, and on no account to fail in observing the time prescribed. It was to fulfil this injunction that Oakley was now about to pursue his journey.

Lord Rockington's was a name that had once made considerable noise in the political world. His military achievements had in youth, for a time, even entitled his head to swing on signs

at ale-house doors. But his glories had been suddenly overcast—he had had his reverses, which had caused a re-action of public opinion. Impeachment had been threatened, but not persevered in. His name, however, was scratched out of the Red Book, and his head painted over on the sign-posts. Disgrace had driven him to seek his present retirement, and his former reputation, as well as his more recent infamy, were speedily alike forgotten in the quick succession which followed of greater events, and perhaps greater men. Few ever inquired whether he was physically, as well as politically dead. All know how soon the attention of the world is turned, even from characters yet undeveloped, and events yet unravelled ; and here was a man whom the public voice had alternately praised and vituperated, each in its highest degree. What more could be made of

him? Indeed, for many years, Lord Rockington's name was never mentioned, even in those circles where it had once been "familiar in their mouths as household words," save when now and then it was brought on the *tapis* incidentally at Lord Latimer's, as that of a crabbed old curmudgeon who spoilt sport on the 12th of August.

When Oakley arrived at the last stage on the main road, from whence he was to turn off to his uncle's, great indeed was the wonderment expressed at his ordering horses for Rockington Castle; it could not have caused more confusion in the whole stable-establishment, if he had desired to be driven to the North Pole.

"Why, is not this Lord Rockington's post town?" inquired Oakley of the landlord.

"Yes, Sir, but it's a matter of twenty miles off," answered mine host, "and as to letters, why for years that I have been post-master,

there has never come a single one for him, nor have I so much as seen the like of his frank."

After extracting from the tap-room a drunken ostler, who was reported once to have driven Lord Rockington's leaders when a lad, and appealing in vain to his recollections on the subject of the road then, and receiving only the uniform answer—"Na, he never gi'ed I a drop of owt when I's gitten them," the stable conclave at length decided, that after Bill had turned out of the main road, down Ruggedrutt-lane, he must inquire the way.

Accordingly, after Bill had at length succeeded in convincing his puzzled posters that they were not going their regular stage to —, and had made the turning down Ruggedrutt-lane, constant inquiry was necessary, but not always easy, as after quitting the attractive neighbourhood of the great road, population

became thinner, and straggling houses were seen but at considerable intervals. Sometimes their questions were only answered by a stupid stare—at others, by “Rockington Castle! Na, you munna gang there;” but whenever they succeeded in obtaining a direct answer, the road evidently the most overgrown, and apparently the least frequented, was the one pointed out to them

Profiting by this hint, when, from no symptoms remaining of neighbouring habitation further verbal inquiries became impossible, Oakley adopted the plan of always taking the turning over which he saw written, “No road this way; trespassers will be punished;” construing, under the peculiar circumstances of the case, this regular warning as a direction-post to Rockington Castle, and the threat which followed into an invitation to choose that path.

As he advanced, it was impossible that Oakley should not be struck with astonishment at the extraordinary appearance of the whole face of the country: that which had once been a well-cultivated estate was now one vast wilderness. The hedges were unclipped; the more vigorous plants, of which they were composed, had shot up into wild over-growth, and now remained dotted about in irregular clumps, appearing like a dwarfish forest wood. The ground, which had once been tilled to yield its varied and successive produce, now offered, over all its wide extent of surface, only the rank growth of uncropped herbage; and now and then among the trees were seen at intervals the broken remnants of apparently ruined buildings.

As Oakley's progress brought him under one of those, he was at a loss to account for the present state of the dilapidated dwelling,

which seemed neither decayed by the mouldering hand of time, nor crushed by the sudden wrath of the elements, nor yet stripped by the spoliation of human hands. It had been rendered utterly uninhabitable; the covering of the roof was scattered around; and beams and rafters, torn from their resting-place, were confusedly leaning against the bared walls.

But in the lower rooms, the yet unbroken state of the casements showed that no wanton mischief had been allowed to intrude upon its deserted state since the hour of its demolition; and that this had not been recent, appeared from the size of two goodly trees, the unchecked growth of which obscured the whole front, and sent their topmost shoots over the broken roof, but when saplings, had, it seemed, lent their supple twigs to form an arbour over the heads of those who had last reposed, where

were still left the rotten remains of a worm-eaten bench.

Oakley afterwards learnt, that upon Lord Rockington's first seclusion, the whole of his estate had been laid waste for the purpose merely of stopping to its utmost limits his wanderings, without the chance of his being offended with the sight of a fellow-creature. Extravagant as this may seem, yet solitude was his mania; and though he paid fifteen thousand a-year for it, yet, what is not paid by many to secure the constant presence of the “human face divine?” and none ever sought society with half the eagerness that he shunned it. The preposterous extent too of this sacrifice to a ruling passion, was somewhat diminished by his deriving thirty thousand a-year from other estates which he never visited.

But though all this may account for the act

on the mere ground of self-indulgence, yet must deep disappointment, and consequent misanthropy, have conspired to harden the heart that could without a pang have given the order, and unmoved have beheld its execution ; for it was just one of those primitive, secluded spots, where, in proportion as the social sympathies are undeveloped, attachment to the soil is strongest ; and the ejectment which left untenanted that one deserted arbour which Oakley had passed, destroyed more endearing ties and more cherished associations, than would have been disturbed by a whole century of improvements in a crowded metropolis.

Now, however, that time had hallowed the work, the effect it had produced was wild and picturesque. The outline of the country was bold and abruptly broken : it had always been one of those rugged regions over which man seems to hold his control but by a

feeble tenure ; and, in this instance, the moment of his abdication had been quickly followed by the disappearance of any traces of his authority, and Nature, in her wildest garb, had as speedily resumed undivided dominion. Even quickset hedges, those badges of man's superintending presence, had thrown off the rectangular livery of art ; and, scattered about in irregular and tangled brakes, beneath the wide-spreading arms of loftier trees, added to the wildness of the scene.

All this harmonized peculiarly with Oakley's existing feelings, and prepared his mind for the events which were to follow. After driving through many miles of this depopulated desert, he arrived at the gate of Rockington Castle. No softening symptoms of return to civilization had marked his approach : it rose upon the sight like a mighty vessel out of the bosom of the troubled waters, and

stood in the midst of the wide waste in solitary grandeur, the only work of man for miles around.

Rockington Castle was an edifice which really deserved its cognomen of Castle, not assumed merely on the strength of latticed windows or a flag-staff, but deriving its title from a period prior to the Conquest, crowned as it then was with the identical turrets which still overhung its eastern summit, and bearing about in different parts the distinguishing marks of each succeeding century except the present; for it had fortunately escaped the mongrel patch-work of modern improvements. With the present day, it seemed to hold no connexion. The shades of mailed knights and warriors of the olden time might have been expected to hover about so congenial a spot, but that it should contain a living modern master, seemed almost incredible.

Oakley's postilion was obliged by main strength to force back the great gate upon its rusty hinges, and he found himself in the grass-grown court-yard at the moment that a deep-toned bell, the first symptom of inhabitancy, struck the appointed hour for his arrival.

“ My lord has just been asking for you,” said a veteran attendant who met him at the door; “ it is well you had not arrived too late—he is sadly changed within these two days.” With this, he ushered him through a suite of dilapidated rooms.

Oakley (to whom the idea of immediate danger had never suggested itself, from the methodical manner in which his presence had been desired) was not a little shocked at this declaration. The aged attendant left him alone for a minute in a sort of picture-gallery, whilst he proceeded to announce his arrival.

There would have been much for a genealogist, and somewhat for a connoisseur to study in the gallery, which seemed devoted alone to commemorate the martial representatives of the family. There were seen warriors of every age, from the first rudiments of the art of painting, when coats of mail were sketched with a pencil as hard and as stiff as the substance it depicted. After them appeared a valuable specimen or two of the matchless time of Vandyke ; then came a profusion of the flowing periwigs and shining breast-plates of the vain and frivolous age which followed, and which owes its immortality to the colouring of Lely and of Kneller.

One alone was to be seen of a more recent date, which rivetted the attention of Oakley : it was a full-length portrait of his uncle on horseback—he was represented in the prime of manhood, at the moment of victory. As a work of art it had few recommendations, but as a

portrait it was perfect ; for it conveyed the expression so often experienced, without knowing the person pourtrayed, of an indisputable likeness. It was an admirable head, surviving even the almost overpowering profusion of daubed canvas with which it was surrounded. True, the horse was wooden, and the landscape woolly. The retiring foe was rather shadowy, and the smoke somewhat substantial, but the countenance atoned for all defects : it was the living man himself, and every muscle told a tale of triumphant pride, and gratified love of glory ; and as this must all have been drawn from life at a subsequent period, it was evident that the character of the man had been one in which the habitual indulgence of these feelings had long outlived the moment of their excitement.

Oakley was still gazing intently upon this all but speaking portrait, with a feeling that it

was impossible not to acknowledge the superiority that it seemed to claim, and to partake of the enthusiasm that it exhibited, when he was summoned into the presence of the original. The sudden shock of the contrast was appalling. He might have even been prepared to see a person from age and disease wasted in frame, and worn in feature, but not to behold a countenance which had long lost every trace of the action—of that mind which had given life to the picture—nor to find that a piece of coloured canvas could appear animated by that commanding soul, which no longer inspired the living form where it still lingered.

Lord Rockington had been remarkable for the height of his person, and the stateliness of his deportment; and his emaciated figure now seemed to recover a momentary elasticity, as he half attempted to rise to receive his

nephew. A stranger-smile for an instant hovered about his lips—how unlike the conscious curl of proud superiority which marked the mouth of the portrait! A confused and unsettled stare had succeeded to the piercing glance of the fiery eye which had fixed Oakley in that picture, with which he could not help comparing the unhappy object before him.

Lord Rockington addressed his nephew courteously. “Punctuality, I see, has become a practice as well as precept in the world. It is twenty years since I last made an appointment, and I had my own reasons for wishing this not to be broken.”

He paused from the exhaustion which followed this first effort, and which seemed so excessive as to confirm the prediction with which he resumed.

“Mr. Oakley, you have faithfully obeyed the summons of a dying man.”

Oakley expressed, in reply, an earnest hope that in this he might be deceived.

“Words, worthless words,” interrupted Lord Rockington, evidently irritated. After so long a holiday, must my insulted ear again echo back empty professions before its failing sense is for ever delivered from the sickening sounds of human hypocrisy and falsehood. I am a stranger to you, odious by name, loathsome in person; I have given you no cause to hope my life. You are my heir. Have I given you none to wish my death?”

Oakley would have endeavoured to soothe him, and to check these wayward ebullitions of a distempered mind; but Lord Rockington, assuming more composure, motioned him to silence.

“I have much to tell, and little time to tell it in. You doubt my accuracy in predicting the impending dissolution of this care-worn frame.

Dispute with the pedant as to his knowledge of that author whom he has spent a life in expounding. Teach the carrier's drudge his daily course; but doubt me not in that which has long been my only study. For twenty long years life has been a burden; I have sighed to yield, yet still have been doomed to bear it. To foresee some end to this lingering torment has been my only care. Many a time have I mocked myself with false hopes, and the first welcome symptoms of disease have yielded to an unfortunately strong constitution. At last I am rewarded; I have watched from their first doubtful appearance the certain seeds of decay. I have studied all that science has ever recorded, or experience taught of its symptoms, its gradual progress, and final consummation. And this is the day, almost the hour, I have fondly anticipated."

Another protracted pause, from increasing

weakness, succeeded, uninterrupted by Oakley, whose attention was absorbed by the singular declaration he had just heard. The stillness of this mutual silence was broken by the successive tones of various time-pieces which Oakley for the first time observed were placed in different parts of the house. It would have puzzled him to account for the presence of these generally unheeded warnings of the monotony of the life they witnessed, but that from what he had just been told, it seemed to be Lord Rockington's occupation, to mark with studied accuracy the creeping pace of time, that he might foretell with certainty when its finger pointed to his own last hours. Roused, by these much-noted sounds, to a consciousness that time was not to be lost, Lord Rockington resumed.

“ It was not merely to exhibit myself a common-place memento of mortality that I summoned you here. I would will you heir to

my feelings, as I have done to my fortunes ; I would bequeath you, not merely that wealth with which I have been wretched, but that experience with which you may be happy. I would have you despise the world as I do now, not yield its easy victim as I once did. I would leave as the best legacy this world can contain, the consciousness that flattery is but the cloak of envy—confidence but a premium for treachery—that riches are but the means of purchasing disappointment—and that fame is the mark set up by fools to be the sport of knaves."

There was enough of constitutional distrust in the nature of Oakley, as has been already stated, to make him a deeply-interested, almost an assenting auditor of the misanthropic dogmas of his dying uncle.

" I would for this," continued Lord Rockington, " dedicate my last moments to recording the events and actions which marked the

first part of a long life, and the reflections which have accumulated from them in the latter portion of it; but all this must I crowd into a score of sentences, and half as many minutes. My task is harder too, because from long disuse words now refuse to follow at the beck of thought. I had always enjoyed the substantial favours of fortune: for a time I had strutted in the tinsel trappings of fame. I had fought for my country, and conquered. I was the people's idol; courted, caressed, and rewarded—it was the heaven of an hour. At this time a distant and disturbed colony required control; I was selected, from the difficulty of the task, and at once incurred the greatest curse that can befall the native of a free state—responsibility for the exercise of arbitrary powers. I know not now whether my acts were right or wrong: success did not sanction them. One reverse succeeded another, exaggerated accounts of which

were sent to England. Distance magnified my delinquencies, and delayed my defence.

“ The reaction of public opinion was overwhelming : I became the object of universal odium. The most subservient of my creatures, who had participated in my every action, sought to save themselves at my expense ; and when I thought I had been confiding in faithful followers, I found I had been harbouring pseudo-patriot spies. I was openly accused of cruelty, indirectly taunted with cowardice ; and even the most improbable suspicion of peculation was widely circulated and readily believed. I hastened to England to clear my character—every ear was shut against my discredited defence, every door was closed against my disgraced person.

“ I sought the minister whose verbally expressed intentions I had fulfilled, but as my powers had been discretionary, I had no written

instructions to plead. I was freezingly received. He remembered nothing of the past, and for the future referred me to the issue of a threatened motion in parliament. On that anxiously-expected night, skulking in an obscure corner, I saw my accuser arrive. I had last beheld him presiding at a public dinner given in honour of my victory. He was quickly surrounded by troops of eager friends, giving assurances of success, which his confident look confirmed. He was loudly called on by name to commence, when amidst much confusion, the minister interposed, and stated that he had something to communicate which might render further proceedings unnecessary. Breathless attention succeeded. He then announced that it had pleased his Majesty to dismiss Lord Rockington from all his situations and appointments.

“ The inhuman yell of delight, which under the technical appellation of universal cheering,

burst from all sides at this declaration, fell upon my ear like the cry of blood-hounds fastening upon their victim. Instinctively I sought to escape the sound by flight, and yet it seemed to linger in the distance. 'Twas the last greeting of my fellow-men. Twenty years have since elapsed—I hear them still!"

Lord Rockington became violently agitated, as if to exclude these imaginary sounds; he raised to his ears his withered hands—his wild and haggard eyes seemed for a moment to start beneath their pressure, then became fixed—the universal shudder with which he had concluded the sentence was succeeded by strong convulsions, and he remained for some time senseless.

Oakley summoned the ancient attendant whom he had before seen, and who was the only one allowed to approach his master, and demanded whether medical aid could not be procured; but

the old man shook his head, and said he dared not so offend his dying Lord.

After a time, Lord Rockington seemed by a strong effort to recover his speech ; he raised himself upright, then bending towards Oakley, collected his remaining strength, and thus addressed him—

“ Let those, who would scoff at the steadiness of my misanthropy, triumph in the idea that once again before I die I have sought the relief of kindred feelings, that in my last moments I have secured the congenial presence of one whose sincerity even I cannot doubt—Yes, I have found one who shall rejoice in my release, as I do myself. My expectant heir shall as eagerly count my ebbing pulse. His ready hand shall in sympathising pleasure return the convulsive grasp of death.”

These were the last words Lord Rockington

spoke. He had seized Oakley's hand as he uttered them. He then sunk senseless on the sofa, and in a few hours this strange being was no more.

CHAPTER V.

Heavens, have I said, the bounty of this lord!
How many prodigal bits have slaves, and peasants,
This night englutted! Who is not Timon's?
What heart, head, sword, force, means, but is Lord Timon's?
Great Timon, noble, worthy, royal Timon!
Ah! when the means are gone that buy this praise,
The breath is gone, whereof this praise is made:
Feast-won, fast-lost; one cloud of winter showers,
These flies are couch'd.

SHAKSPEARE.

EVENTFUL indeed had these few last hours been to Oakley. They had brought with them, crowded within their narrow limits, (and utterly unforeseen, up to the moment of their arrival,) changes which would have sufficed to fill up a long life of anticipation. The emotions which they had excited in his mind had been as varied as the alteration they had produced in his situation was complete.

He had that morning, for the first time in his life, beheld one who was then his nearest surviving relative. He had, though hitherto a perfect stranger, been admitted at once to his confidence. That confidence was as yet incomplete—when interrupted as abruptly as it had been commenced by final separation. But this strange benefactor had left him a solid memento of their transient connexion, a splendid fortune, which at once secured him the command of the attention and attractions of the world, coupled with the warning legacy which bade him repel its advances, and resist its allurements.

To the substantial advantages arising from his change in situation he was likely to be by no means insensible, but this arose rather from a disagreeable recollection of the slights to which a dependent state had subjected his impatient spirit, than to any expectation of particular pleasure to be derived from future enjoyments.

The parting advice with which the dying bequest had been accompanied, was on many accounts calculated to make the greatest impression on Oakley. That it was disinterested could not be denied, from the situation of him who gave it. That it was dictated by a sincere regard for him to whom it was addressed, had at the same time been testified by solid proofs. The natural bent of Oakley's character gave additional weight to these considerations. Neither his virtues nor talents were of that order which makes a man partial to society, because society is partial to him. A natural instability of temperament predisposed him to take offence, whilst a want of animal spirits prevented his shining in the ready “give and take” of every-day intercourse. The unpleasant impressions which these deficiencies implanted in a proud and reserved nature, had left a distaste for the world which had already prepared the way for that distrust which was

inculcated in the last admonition of his dying uncle.

The aged attendant who had performed the last offices to his departed lord had left the room, and Oakley had remained, he knew not how long, absorbed in the reflections, which all that he had heard and seen was calculated to excite, even in the most thoughtless, but which had taken deep root in a mind to which gloomy impressions were so congenial. The sight of death itself is for the time saddening, even to the most mercurial spirit; but it was not that alone which infected Oakley. It was not the actual presence of the breathless body before him, so much as the chilling contagion of the withered mind he had so lately communed with, which still oppressed him. Most men, if thus suddenly endowed with a princely fortune, whilst possessing youth and health to enjoy it, purchased at no sacrifice of kindly feelings, would

have felt even the decent solemnity of the passing moment somewhat chequered with the coming gleams of the brightening future.

But this was not the impression made on Oakley. He even envied the lifeless form before him its release from the contests of the world, and almost repined at being left as his deputy in a situation where he must undergo the daily drudgery of resisting imposition, and detecting falsehood.

“ Must I then,” thought he, “ commence this painful pilgrimage to which youth and health threaten a long perspective, and can I do so without dislike and dread, seeing as I have seen, that by twenty long years of ceaseless struggle and hopeless suffering, that proud spirit, the transient gleam of whose former fire lives in the canvas I this morning beheld, has been reduced to a fit tenant for the care-worn car-

case from which it has but now obtained its release?"

Surfeited at length with the morbid indulgence of these feelings, Oakley sought a temporary relief in change of scene, and rose to leave the chamber of death, to which the shades of night had now imparted a congenial obscurity. The next room—the picture-gallery mentioned above—was only lighted by a single small candle-stick, left as it were carelessly on a table at the upper end, immediately under the portrait of Lord Rockington, and to which alone of all the inmates of the gallery it bent its feeble light. The surrounding gloom gave additional effect to that which alone was visible, and the countenance of which Oakley had only previously remarked the habitually imperious expression, seemed now to his heated imagination to indicate some special command to himself, and

following the direction of the outstretched arm which pointed at vacancy, he fancied he beheld a door open at the further extremity of the gallery.

He could not be mistaken. He saw the figure of the aged attendant, who advanced with a cautious but a heavy tread, bearing in both hands a weight under which he seemed ready to sink. As he approached the candle, Oakley raised it over his head, to convince himself he was not deceived, upon which the old man dropped his load, and fled precipitately.

Oakley stopped one instant to examine what appeared to be a strong box, probably containing valuables, and then followed the fugitive. But his ignorance of the intricate turnings of the passages favoured the flight of the other, and after pursuing him in vain for some time, his attention was attracted by a noise which sounded

like the animating applause of a theatre, and a moment afterwards many voices joined in the jocund chorus of “Life’s a Bumper.”

“Wretches,” thought Oakley, “well may your insulted master have been impatient to quit a world of which he saw around him such samples. That the very hands which had but just been permitted to close his eyes, should within that hour turn to plunder—and that those menials who had been gorged with his bounty, should profane his last moments with their orgies!”

Hurrying back towards his uncle’s chamber, he paused on the threshold, as if unwilling to suffer the offensive sounds of mirth to penetrate within—though the loudest uproar could no longer disturb its unconscious inmate; but nothing now met his ear, save the more congenial murmur of the evening breeze. Thus re-assured, he entered boldly, and felt refreshed

by the calm and solemn sympathy of the still summer's evening.

In all the feelings which had been excited by the events he had latterly witnessed, he had been actuated entirely by impulse: he adopted as indisputable all the facts stated by Lord Rockington, without considering how much might be grounded on prejudice, and coloured by disappointment. In the disgusting scenes which he had afterwards witnessed, he would not have admitted it as possible that the character and conduct of the master might a little palliate the brutality of the servants.

By this pre-determined canonization of Lord Rockington as a martyr, his own mortified vanity felt consoled. It has been said that he was from natural temperament peculiarly prone to suspicion, and susceptible to slight—and if in the unmerited fall of one formerly so celebrated as Lord Rockington, he had a proof of the caprice

and falsehood of the world, it at once confirmed him in what he was disposed to think of others, and consoled him for what they might think of him.

“It will now,” thought he, “be mine to avoid, and theirs to court—yes, I shall now have it in my power to repay envy with scorn!”

The next morning brought Oakley’s own servant, who had been sent to follow him, and Oakley lost no time in giving a summary dismissal to all the establishment of the late lord, of whose untimely and offensive mirth he had been an unintentional witness. He also despatched a messenger to ——, to summon Lord Rockington’s man of business, who in due time arrived, in the person of Mr. Macdeed, the principal solicitor of the county town.

This worthy gentleman, as he jolted along in the identical chaise which had brought Oakley, consoled himself with the anticipation of an

accession of business arising from the change of clients consequent upon the late demise, for Lord Rockington had not been habitually litigious, though much of Mr. Macdeed's celebrity had been owing to his conduct of the famous cause of “Rockington *versus* Latimer,” by which he had secured to the plaintiff the accession of a property which could never pay him twelve-pence, only at the expense of about as much as would have paid twelve months salary to the twelve judges.

So striking a proof of how well he understood his business, had at once obtained him professional pre-eminence in the county. The consciousness of this sort of decided superiority in a particular line, makes some men solemn and pompous, but Mr. Macdeed it had only made facetious and familiar, by far the most objectionable effect of the two, to a man in Oakley's present frame of mind.

In spite, however, of the forbidding frowns of his auditor, Mr. Macdeed wasted upon him much stiff parchment-like sort of pleasantry, the rough draft of which had previously met with the approbation of the most fastidious tea-tables at the county town aforesaid. He was particularly lively upon the subject of the singularities of his late client. This was an impertinence which, least of all, Oakley could bear. He had risen that morning with an inviolable respect for the memory of his benefactor, and a fixed determination to follow his example in hating all whom he had left behind him in the world. It was no great trial of the consistency of his general hatred of mankind, that the only object which crossed his path, should be an obnoxious attorney; but the dislike which was as yet concentrated in him, might soon have spread over no small circle of acquaintance. Abruptly interrupting him, he

commanded him to proceed at once to business, and that, too, in a tone sensibly wounding Mr. Macdeed's self-importance, which was not the less thin-skinned because dressed in smiles.

The will was found in that identical box which Oakley had accidentally rescued from the hand of Lord Rockington's old servant, who was a subscribing witness, and who had therefore seen it deposited there—and the glimpse he then caught of the other valuables in it, (many thousand pounds worth of jewels,) had probably excited his cupidity.

The disposition of the property was concise and characteristic. There were no legacies; and every thing, without reserve, was left to Oakley. This being ascertained, Mr. Macdeed was summarily dismissed with a want of courtesy which aggravated the offence already given, and of which Oakley afterwards felt the effects.

In the arrangements Oakley made for the funeral, he thought he best consulted the feelings of the deceased by limiting the display of fictitious and assumed grief to those only whose aid was absolutely necessary to remove the body to its last place of rest; forbidding the presence of any one in the character of mourner but himself. In the meantime, having written to Germain alone, to announce the death of their uncle, and the change in his circumstances, he occupied himself with solitary rambles in the picturesque wilds around the castle, mistaking, however, the source of the pleasure he derived from this, and attributing to satisfaction at the absence of all traces of man's corroding presence, the sensations which arose merely from a strong susceptibility to the beauties of nature.

CHAPTER VI.

At first
I stuck my choice npon her, ere my heart
Durst make too bold a herald of my tongue:
Where the impression of mine eye enfixing,
Contempt his scornful perspective did lend me,
Which warp'd the line of every other favour;
Scorn'd a fair colour, or express'd it stol'n;
Extended or contracted all proportions
To a most hideous object.

SHAKSPEARE.

GERMAIN and Fitzalbert remained some time at ——, not knowing exactly where to transport themselves. Most of the friends of the latter, of whose hospitality he meant to avail himself during the dead months, had not yet established themselves in their country quarters.

Fitzalbert now passed all his mornings in bed,

having a happy facility of sleeping in the absence of every other amusement, and this he enjoyed in spite of the situation of his bed, which was so near the window that he could, from his pillow, command the whole range of bathing-machines, and might, if he pleased, trace the entrance of the well-flounced petticoat at one door, and the exit of the somewhat tighter fitting bathing-dress at the other.

Germain, who was habitually an early riser, determined to avail himself of this independence of the companionship of his friend, to ease his conscience of the promised visit to the Dormers.

Of all the minor social sins, none entails so acute a sense of shame as a past and repented-of flirtation—and it was with very uncomfortable feelings of guilty embarrassment, that Germain approached the lodging of his former mistress, to whom he had once paid attentions so assi-

duous. Not but that he must be acquitted of any legal offence: he never had involved himself in any engagement, or even committed himself by a declaration—he had never indeed been guilty of any thing more definite and positive than exchanging awkward and sheepish looks across the pew, when her father published the Sunday's banns. However, the apothecary's wife had long settled that the parson's pupil and his daughter would make a sweet pair, and were likely to have a fine family; and the attorney's lady hinted that Mr. Dormer knew where good settlements were to be had.

There were many local associations about the place, where they had formerly met, which had conspired to excite Germain's tender feelings. The parsonage itself was pretty and pastoral—with the early morning his eye would wander from his book to follow the form of Fanny, watering the rose-beds under his window; and

after the studies of the day, they used to drink tea together in a woodbine arbour. Add to all this, that he was but eighteen ; and if there ever was a youth of that age who could resist the perpetual propinquity of a liquid blue eye, and a fair fresh skin, he is a monster whom the whole sex will have given up in despair before he is five-and-twenty.

But three years had since elapsed, and in the meantime Germain's mind had been as much enlarged as Fanny Dormer's person. The place of meeting, too, instead of reviving the charm of consistent propriety, was incongruous and inconvenient ; and whilst waiting in the narrow passage of the paper-built lodging-house, it was in vain that he endeavoured to fortify himself with souvenirs of beds of roses and woodbine bowers, against the over-powering smell of fried sole which arose from the intrusive kitchen below. The small side parlour

into which he was shown, and into which were crowded Mr. Dormer, Fanny, and her multitudinous occupations, presented the appearance of confusion without comfort. Mr. Dormer was stuck in an easy chair in one corner—his attention agreeably divided between his lumbago and the county paper.

There was nothing extraordinary in Fanny's reception of her visitor; but as Germain's eye fell upon the out-stretched hand which accompanied the greeting, he remarked that her fingers (unlike Aurora's) were tipped with ink—no very singular consequence of writing most of the morning, but one that would never have been remarked by a lover.

“I hope I don't interrupt you,” said Germain.

“Always a welcome interruption,” replied Mr. Dormer; “but you would be puzzled to time your visit so as to find Fanny idle.”

And, indeed, that indefatigable young lady,

besides the usual allowance of scribbling, which had produced the disfiguring effects upon her fingers noted above, had been employed in sorting Scotch pebbles and sand-stones, spreading dried sea-weed, and was now engaged in preparing sundry articles for a Ladies' Repository—an ingenious establishment, for which many ladies waste more money in purchasing materials, than industrious work-women would charge for the finished articles, in order to have the pleasure of seeing charity distributed, and the needy relieved, not in proportion as food is wanted, but as fire-screens are fancied. To this Fanny was a zealous but a thrifty contributor, and she was now occupied in rounding emery strawberries, the foliage of which was to be formed of scraps of her light green cloth pelisse.

Germain commenced the conversation by attempting some awkward compliments upon her

notable pursuits, but as he felt himself in a false position, he was relieved by Mr. Dormer's addressing him.

“ Upon my word, Mr. Germain, you do no credit to your keep since you left us—you have not fared so well in those meagre countries where you have been, as you used to do, upon my fattened cuyleys and seven years old moor-mutton, and some of Fanny’s firmity for supper.”

The fact was, that the mode of life Germain had been lately leading at Paris, was not near so much calculated for the promotion of “ too solid flesh,” as the vegetating state of existence at Rosedale Rectory, where even sentiment was rather soporific.

“ I suppose,” continued Mr. Dormer, “ that they half starved you in those Catholic countries with their fast days.”

But Germain protesting that he never had suffered any positive privation, Mr. Dormer,

by a natural transition from body to soul, turned to the other subject, almost as constantly in his mind ; and after folding in an important manner the newspaper he held in his hand, he began.

“ Pray, Mr. Germain, might I ask whether in those popish parts you have lately visited, you were ever unfortunate enough to be present at any of those sacrifices to superstition—those auto-da-fès—those burnings of heretics ?”

“ No, indeed,” replied Germain, rather surprised : “ nor was I aware that any events of the kind had taken place within the memory of man. This is the first I ever heard of it.”

“ I am sorry, my young friend,” rejoined Mr. Dormer, with an air of reproach, “ to find that you have made so little use of your time—that you have not been a more observant traveller.”

Then again unfolding the county paper, he read aloud, with earnest emphasis, the words in italics.

“ *Characteristics of Catholicism—Burning of a Jew.* It is, we are proud to say, not a little owing to *our* unceasing efforts in the *good Protestant cause*, that these burning piles are seen only as a warning beacon from afar—that the flames are not now kindled in Smithfield, or the crackling faggots heard in the market-place beneath our own office-window. For if such is the treatment of the papists towards an unoffending *Israelite*, what might we expect, if they had the power, towards the objects of their unceasing detestation—the *loyal Protestants* of these most *religious realms*? Yet there are amongst us those infatuated enough to wish to open wide our doors to them. What doors? and to whom?—why the very

doors of those two houses of parliament which, never let it be forgotten, they conspired to blow to atoms with their hellish popish plot."

Germain, perceiving that his worthy friend was not in a state of mind for serious argument, simply asked: "Do you think, sir, the Catholics would be so much more likely to blow up the parliament, if they had seats in it themselves?"

"God forbid we should ever try!" ejaculated the Rev. Mr. Dormer; in which short question and answer is contained the epitome of the arguments on either side, which are sometimes diluted into many successive nights' debate on this somewhat threadbare subject.

"But come, Mr. Germain," said Mr. Dormer, after a pause, "music has charms, and Fanny shall delight you with 'Home, sweet Home.'" Accordingly Fanny posted herself

obediently at a jingling upright piano-forte, and began.

It is a penalty upon the popularity of a piece of music in England, that in six months every hand-organist grinds it, and every ostler whistles it; and the attraction which in this instance it originally owed to one person alone, is perpetually weakened by its being screamed or slurred over by every young lady who has a single note in her voice, and most of those who have none.

“ It is not so much,” said Mr. Dormer, “ Fanny’s musical talent, as that she sings it with so much depth of true domestic feeling.”

Germain bowed an extorted assent to the paternal puff, and repeated mechanically, “ So much depth of true domestic feeling.”

The extremes of art and nature sometimes

touch each other, and even Lady Flamborough, with all her manœuvring, could not have attempted a more home thrust, as a maternal manager, than Mr. Dormer, in the simplicity of his heart, gave utterance to, in this mere ebullition of natural affection. But Germain was at present proof against the remaining charms of Fanny Dormer—he felt triply armed against a relapse by the consciousness of a vast foot, thick waist, and inky fingers; and not a little ashamed of his former weakness, he brought his visit to an abrupt conclusion.

Upon Germain's return to his lodgings, he found Oakley's letter, announcing the death of their uncle; but as this letter had followed him from place to place, resting by the way at sundry country post-offices, it did not forestall the regular notice of the event in the London papers.

Germain was not a little surprised at Oakley's

dwelling much more, in the first part of his letter, upon the loss he had sustained in the death of a relation he had never known, than upon the acquisition of a fortune which he had always expected. From this turning to the concerns of his friend, Oakley continued—

“ I can assure you, my dear Germain, that neither this important change in my own fortune, nor the agitation of the unexpected event which caused it, has prevented me from reflecting much and seriously on your future prospects, such as I think I am able to foresee them, from the insight that long intimacy has given me into your disposition, and however unwelcome to you it may be, I cannot but repeat, that the unhappy facility of your temper which renders it an impossibility to you to say, ‘ No,’ will open your purse to every sharper, and surrender your heart to the first flirt you meet. This last is a danger, however, against

which it is quite out of my province to guard you; but as to the first, though I cannot prevent it, I may postpone its evil consequences to you; and as you are always in want of money, and I have now more than I shall ever know what to do with, I have desired my banker, without limitation, to answer your drafts."

"Generous fellow! his conclusion is admirable, though his reasoning is somewhat defective," thought Germain, calling to mind, with consolatory consciousness, what had passed since they parted, and that he had escaped being either Fitzalbert's dupe, or Fanny Dormer's victim.

He found Fitzalbert still *en robe de chambre*, at the breakfast-table, over muffins and shrimps.

"Nothing in the newspaper," said he; I have just finished it. Let me see; 'Mar-

riages.—Mr. John Smith to Miss Jane Brown, both of this town.'—Important. ' Birth.—At Little Warren, the lady of the Rev. Peter Parsley was brought to bed of twins, being her nineteenth and twentieth.'—More inconvenient to the Rev. Peter Parsley than interesting to us. But, what is this?—' Died, on Thursday last, at Rockington Castle, George James, Lord Viscount Rockington;—by his lordship's demise, the ancient title becomes extinct, but all his ample fortunes descend to his nephew, Ernest Oakley, Esq.' Did you know this, Germain?'"

" I have just heard from Oakley, announcing the event."

" Oakley! well, I wish it had been you.—I hope, however, he will make a proper use of it. By the bye, Béchamel is now out of place: he should write about him; he is quite a *cordon bleu* for the first course; and though he

knows nothing about *pâtisserie*, of course Oakley will have a confectioner."

"All in good time," said Germain; "he writes me word that he is about to leave Rockington Castle for his other place, Goldsborough Park, where he is wanted on business, by the late Lord Rockington's agent for that property. I think I shall go over and see him there."

"I can drop you then, at the park-gate; for I have received a very pressing summons from Lady Boretton, to join the party she has just collected. You must meet me again at the Borettons: you are included in the invitation, all in due form: 'Know your family well'—'old friend of your mother's';—and so forth."

Germain, to whom a long *tête-à-tête* with Oakley in his present temper, had few attractions, and who was also anxious as soon as

possible to establish himself in the world, caught readily at this proposal of Fitzalbert's.

"Will there," said he, "be a large party at the Boretos?"

"Of that you may always feel yourself pretty sure; a little mixed, sometimes; but I own that is no great objection to me—my taste is become so depraved that I rather relish a tiger. From long usage, the regular routine of the exclusives appears to me, 'weary, flat,' et cetera. More than I envy Oakley the fulness of his purse, do I envy you the freshness of your feelings. For after all, of what use are riches but as the capital with which to purchase pleasure—the real free-trade which is all over at five-and-twenty? Then are our ports honestly open for the reception of every agreeable sensation from without, but after that we are subject to all the drawbacks of our

artificial situation, and fastidiousness is the protecting duty with which we starve our senses."

Germain, who had never heard Fitzalbert utter a serious sentence before, was rather puzzled to know whether he was quizzing or not. To avoid the awkwardness of mistaking his vein, he asked him: "Of what species are the tigers we are to meet at Lady Boreton's—physical or intellectual—bucks or bores?"

"Principally the latter, for her ladyship is rather blue, and has generally some hangers-on who dabble in literature, or skim the surface of science. But don't be alarmed—you will also meet Lady Latimer and her two unmarried sisters—and these among them secure the attendance of all the best men, whether marrying or otherwise, who can get themselves invited. What would I give that Lady Latimer should be as new to me as she is to you! Gladly would I suffer, as you will, from the first fear of her

frowns, to be rewarded with a faint hope of her smiles—but, alas! we have long settled for life into easy intimacy and friendly indifference. I am on this, as on every thing else—perfectly *blasé*. Why is that phrase as exclusively French as the feeling is English? It is long since any thing to my taste has seemed *fresh*, except, indeed, these shrimps,” added he, changing his tone suddenly, and adding another to the hecatomb of shells which crowded his plate; after which he rose from the breakfast-table, and they made arrangements for their departure on the morrow for Boretton Park, where Germain was to join Fitzalbert, after having spent a night by the way with his friend Oakley.

Lest the reader, however, should have as great a dread as Germain himself of a *tête-à-tête* with Oakley in his present gloomy temper, we will not intrude beyond the park-gate where Fitzalbert deposited his fellow-traveller with, “ By

the bye, Germain, you may as well see if you can do any thing with Oakley about an exchange of that property which joins Latimer Moors—you may remember I showed it to you at a distance, from the top of that hill when I brought down both those two old birds you had just missed.”

CHAPTER VII.

The catastrophe is a nuptial. On whose side?

SHAKSPEARE.

“Who do you think is coming here to-day?” said Lady Flamborough to her two daughters, as she retired with them to her dressing-room, the party dispersing after breakfast at Boreton Park.

The young ladies were well aware, from long experience of their mother’s manner, that this could only apply to an unmarried, and yet a

marrying man, and Lady Caroline therefore promptly replied—

“ I suppose, mamma, you mean Mr. Germain —Mr. Fitzalbert told me you expected him.”

“ Yes, my dear ; I remember him a very pretty little boy when I last saw him with his mother, soon after Mr. Germain’s death. It was a shocking thing, to be sure, to be left an orphan so young ; but the long minority must have much improved his property, and there is nothing so desirable in a young man as ready money for an outfit.”

“ But, mamma,” said Lady Jane, “ Major Sumner told me that he knew for certain that Mr. Germain had spent all his ready money.”

“ I don’t know,” replied Lady Flamborough rather sharply, “ what right Major Sumner has to tell you any thing ; but I must tell you, the encouragement you give to such a man must be very disadvantageous to you.”

“Really, mamma, I am not aware of ever having given Major Sumner any reason to suppose that I encouraged his attentions. Our neighbourhood at dinner here is purely accidental. You might as well attack Caroline for sitting next Mr. Fitzalbert.”

“That is quite a different case,” said Lady Flamborough. “Mr. Fitzalbert is a privileged person, for he is known never to speak to a girl, unless a dowager is the only alternative. But no young lady ought ever to talk twice to a man who seems to take pleasure in her society, unless she knows him to be eligible. And as for Major Sumner, he has the most sighing swain-like manner I ever beheld. He asks you to drink a glass of wine as if he were uttering a sentiment, and hands you to dinner as if he were leading you to the altar.”

“Well, mamma,” answered Lady Jane, “you have often complained of my inattention in not

following your advice, but you will not have to reproach me with disobedience, if you never enjoin any thing more difficult than the avoiding Major Sumner; for, to tell you the truth, he bores me uncommonly."

"To be sure he does. I was certain you had too much good taste to like him: but that wouldn't stop that old gossip Lady Diana Griffin's pen. She was allowed to walk out alone to dinner yesterday, which of course called her attention to who sat next whom; and whilst she reposed in solitary state, with the vacant places for the absent Banquos left on each side of her, I observed her eyes fixed across the table upon the long chin of Major Sumner, which was much oftener protruded perpendicularly over your plate than his own; and this morning, as I went to breakfast, I saw six letters in her formidably legible hand-writing waiting for stray franks."

“ But I think I can defy even her ingenuity to extract an incident out of our dull dinner.”

“ Perhaps so ; but I cannot too often recommend caution to you both as to encouraging disadvantageous danglers in a country-house. It is twice as dangerous as a London season. There, some kind friend is sure to bring one the first unpleasant remark hot from the club-window where it was cocked, and one can take measures accordingly ; but here, a report is shuttlecocked backwards and forwards for six months before one hears it, gaining fresh strength every time it passes through the post-office, till at last a young lady is set down as behaving very ill to some beggar who has been accidentally thrown in her way. It is rather a dangerous experiment to get yourself talked about for the man you really mean to marry. It is purely mischievous to be buzzed about with an exceptionable. If it was for no other reason,

that every recorded flirtation, however transient, is, unjustly or not, reckoned as a year added to a young lady's age."

"I dare say you are quite right, mamma," said Lady Caroline, who feeling that the lecture was now no longer confined to her sister, thought it as well to come to her assistance, and at the same time, confine the conversation to the specific charge; "but, with regard to Major Sumner's attention to Jane, you must recollect, that as soon as ever Miss Luton began to play her eternal concerto, that identical long chin, which you accuse of having hung perpendicularly over Jane's plate, was nailed to the sounding board; and there the Major sat in fixed admiration, through all its endless rondos."

"Ay," answered Lady Flamborough, "that is a great mistake of poor Mrs. Luton's; she is one of the old school. That indiscriminating

desire to display a daughter's talents, is justly out of date. Young ladies have not fascination at their fingers' ends, as mothers and music-masters have long conspired to persuade the world. Besides, men, with all their boasted superiority, are such vain weak creatures, that they are always easier caught by admiration paid than demanded. You will be able to find out what Mr. Germain's tastes and pursuits are, and then it will be time enough to display yours, if you find that they don't clash."

"But why, mamma, should you settle it at once, as a matter of course, that there should be such reciprocal attraction between Mr. Germain and me?" asked Lady Jane; "I never saw him, and he probably never heard of me."

"That's the very reason," answered Lady Flamborough, "that I expect something to come of your present meeting. You will be for some time boxed up here together. He has

never been out in London ; and, without making you vain, there is not much here to distract his attention. If this general election takes place, we shall probably see his friend Mr. Oakley here, as his interest is the same as that of the Boretos. He, from what I 've heard, is more difficult to manage, but very good-looking, and enormously rich. He would just suit Caroline : and his property joins Lord Latimer's—it would be the very thing for Louisa."

" I doubt, mamma, whether Louisa would think it the very thing for her, that her next neighbour, a gay young man, should settle at once into a humdrum Benedict, and a brother-in-law into the bargain."

" That puts me in mind," returned Lady Flamborough, " to tell you how much shocked I was the other day, to hear you, in a mixed society, allude to Louisa's flirtations ; for though she only exacts so much individual attention as

is necessary to make up the sum of general admiration, which, as a reigning beauty, is undoubtedly her due, yet it is a subject upon which any young lady, and more particularly a sister, had better affect utter unconsciousness. At the same time, if Mr. Germain admires you, Jane, as I expect he will, make it obvious before Louisa comes, for she certainly sometimes does seem to take a pleasure in making a snatch at loosely hung chains."

A summons to luncheon here interrupted the maternal lecture.

"What do you mean to do afterwards?" asked Lady Flamborough.

"Caroline is going to ride," answered Lady Jane; "and I mean to walk with Miss Luton through the park, as far as the north lodge."

"The north lodge," said Lady Flamborough, "just so; the road from Goldsborough Park comes through the north lodge; and you never

look so well as when walking," added she, casting first an approving glance at the fine form of her daughter, and then rather an anxious one at her pale cheek, on which the healthy hue of exercise would, no doubt, effect improvement.

But this morning, the roses on Lady Jane's cheek were doomed to bloom unseen, for Germain intentionally protracted his arrival till dusk, thinking the dressing-hour the most convenient opportunity for dropping into the middle of a large party of people, among whom he knew hardly a creature.

His youth and inexperience will sufficiently account for his feeling a little shy before he was duly amalgamated; for the most self-possessed can hardly help experiencing an uncomfortable sensation of insufficiency, when endeavouring in vain to catch, as it is bandied before him, the tone of a society to which he alone is strange.

As Germain stood for a moment with the handle of the drawing-room door in his hand, before he could decide upon opening it, that act was involuntarily accelerated, by hearing voices descending the stairs behind him, and he found himself in a blaze of light; and, among a confused mass of heads, distinguished his friend Fitzalbert, who, advancing to meet him, presented him in due form to his hostess, Lady Boretton. Her ladyship overloaded her new acquaintance with civilities; she was excessively voluble, and it was difficult to remember much of her communications: which arose more from the redundancy than the paucity of matter they contained.

She introduced Germain in succession to each of her other guests, who happened to pass near them, following up each presentation with a little “aside,” meant to put her new visiter *au fait* of the various characters and pursuits of the

motley assemblage. But either her definitions were not distinct enough, or his faculties were too much embarrassed to enable him to retain their separate identity ; and when Lady Boretton was summoned away to some new object of attention, Germain retained only a confused consciousness, that there were among the unknown faces, that surrounded him, captains that had been to the North Pole ; chemists, who could extract ice from caloric ; transatlantic travellers, and sedentary bookworms ; some authors, who owned to anonymous publications they had never written ; and others, who were suspected of those they denied ; besides the usual quantum of young ladies and gentlemen, who rested their claims to distinction upon the traditional deeds of their great-grandfathers.

One little man, in particular, whom he could not make out at all, attracted Germain's attention ; he fidgetted about Lady Boretton whilst

she was talking to him, but she, instead of introducing and defining him like the rest, only told him to ring the bell. When Germain was left to himself, and therefore could attend to what was going on around him, he saw this little man attempt in vain to insinuate himself into two or three of the little groupes that were dotted about the room, and uniformly repulsed in the same way as he had been by Lady Boretton. At last he came up to Germain himself, who was standing alone, and asked him if he had ever been in that part of the country before. Germain, with true English reserve, felt half offended at what he thought an impertinence in a person to whom he had not been introduced, and was inclined to answer him shortly, when Fitzalbert coming up, shivering, and saying rather sharply, “ those doors haven’t an idea of shutting,” the little man flew to shut them, and Germain was on the

point of asking his friend whether he was the culprit architect, when the mystery was explained by Lady Boretton crying out, in the highest key of her voice :—“ Sir John, dinner is ready ;” and then the little man, having just shut one door, was seen sneaking out of the other with the lady of the highest rank upon his arm.

Germain afterwards found that poor Sir John was considered a nonentity alike by those who stood behind the chairs, and those who sat around his table. Lady Boretton’s masculine mind comprehended equally political principles and domestic details, whilst Sir John’s department was confined to signing deeds and helping soup.

Germain having drawn back to allow those who assumed either precedence on their own parts, or partiality on that of the ladies, to pass two and two before him, followed among the

mass of men who brought up the rear, and would probably have been condemned to sit between two strangers, had not Fitzalbert made him a sign to take a vacant place on the other side of the lady whom he had escorted.

In availing himself of this hint, Germain had only time to cast a transient glance at a finely-shaped profile, and a prettily turned figure, when Fitzalbert interrupted his survey by saying, “Lady Jane, you must allow me to make you acquainted with my friend, Mr. Germain.”

A slight acknowledgment was all that immediately followed this fortuitous introduction, but it lighted up for a moment Lady Flamborough’s watchful countenance, even though she was herself suffering under a severe dose of one of the most unrelenting bores that ever infested society.

“It is always as well here to know who

one's next neighbour is," continued Fitz-albert; "for this is not one of those snug parties where one can do or say what one pleases without observation."

"How do you mean?" asked Germain.

"Why, Lady Boretton encourages these literary poachers on the manors, or rather *manners* of high life; she gives a sort of right of free chase to all cockney sportsmen to wing one's follies in a double-barrelled duodecimo, or hunt one's eccentricities through a hot-pressed octavo. Not that they are, generally speaking, very formidable shots—they often bring down a different bird from the one they aimed at, and sometimes shut their eyes and blaze away at the whole covey; which last is, after all, the best way. Their coming here to pick out individuals is needless trouble. Do you know the modern recipe for a finished picture of fashionable life? Let a gentlemanly

man, with a gentlemanly style, take of foolscap paper a few quires ; stuff them well with high-sounding titles—dukes and duchesses, lords and ladies, *ad libitum*. Then open the Peerage at random, pick a supposititious author out of one page of it, and fix the imaginary characters upon some of the rest ; mix it all up with quantum suff. of puff, and the book is in a second edition before ninety-nine readers out of a hundred have found out the one is as little likely to have written, as the others to have done what is attributed to them.”

“ How then can Lady Boretton’s assistance be of any consequence in a pursuit which seems as free as air ? ” asked Germain.

“ Oh ! here at least they have an opportunity of observing the cut of one’s coat, and the colour of one’s hair. For instance : that young gentleman opposite is a self-constituted definer of fashion, in which character he has

not only already recorded that a fork, not a knife, should be the active agent in carrying food to the mouth, but has made some more original discoveries, such as, that young ladies should be dieted on the wings of boiled chickens, and fine gentlemen should quaff nought but hock and soda-water; that roast beef is a vulgar horror, and beer an abomination. I will secure his rejection of me upon his next conscription of the fashionable world.— Some small beer, pray,” added Fitzalbert, turning round to the servant, and speaking in a peculiarly decided tone of voice. “ So sensitive a soul must be much shocked at much he hears and sees amongst great people “ *en domestique*,” as he calls it; by which, don’t imagine he means ‘ High Life below Stairs.’ I hope, however, Lady Jane, that before he next hints a sketch of your sister, Lady Latimer, he will have learnt that she has not red hair, and does not habitually exclaim, ‘ Good gracious!’ ”

Fitzalbert was in high spirits ; and whilst he thus went rattling on, necessarily engrossed so much of the attention of both Germain and Lady Jane, that the neighbourhood of the two latter did not seem likely to have the beneficial consequences at first anticipated by Lady Flamborough ; but the desired impression was nevertheless caught, whether naturally from accidental affinity, or afterwards inoculated during a long conversation with Lady Flamborough herself, certain it is, that when Germain lighted his flat candlestick for bed, the predominant feeling in his mind was, that Lady Jane Sydenham was a remarkably nice girl.

CHAPTER VIII.

I shall forget to have thee still stand here,
Remembering how I love thy company.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE next morning's post brought a few lines from Lady Latimer to Lady Boretton, announcing her intended arrival to dinner that day. The intercourse between the two families had always been scrupulously maintained by the regular alternation of prescribed visits ; and the acceptance of the expected invitation always was received on both sides with great

appearance of satisfaction. Not that much pleasure was ever anticipated by either ; but any falling off in their reciprocal cordiality would at once have threatened to disturb the political peace of the county, which was only maintained by a compromise between these two great rival interests.

At the present moment, there were appearances which threatened that this truce would not be of much longer duration ; and, following the example of more dignified diplomatists, they redoubled the outward demonstrations of mutual good understanding, as their fears increased that future hostilities would be inevitable. These fears were, in this instance, more sincere than is often the case with some of their national prototypes, which arose probably from this difference in their situation, that if they fought, it must be with their own money, not the people's ; they would have to

distribute, not to levy ; the gain might be public, but the cost would certainly be private.

However, at the next general election a successor would have to be selected for Mr. Medium, who had announced his intention of then retiring, after having been for thirty years received as an oracle by both parties, principally from his own indecision of character. He had not unfrequently carried the House with him from the mere charm of inconsistency, and been listened to as an orator from a reputation for sincerity, which seemed chiefly founded upon an earnest manner and indifferent English. Such as he was, though he had been a convenient stop-gap, his general leaning to Tory principles had satisfied Lord Latimer, who was not an eager politician, and his occasional effective opposition to ministers had almost consoled Lady Boretton, who was a red-hot liberal.

Those most cogent reasons for keeping the peace, whether of countries or counties—the want of men and money, were both here in full force. Lord Latimer had no younger brother to put forward to quicken his political feelings with the incitement of family distinction, and Lady Boretton could never attempt to produce Sir John on the hustings. On both sides too their finances left no available surplus after current expenses. Lady Boretton's anxiety to save the county from the disgrace of being represented by two such Tories, had induced her to turn her attention towards Oakley, whose political feelings were supposed to be liberal, and who, from his recently-acquired great possessions, seemed to be the fittest person to put forward. She was very anxious to get him to her house, that she might have an opportunity of sounding him upon the subject, and she the more rejoiced at the su-

per-civility which had induced her to invite Lady Flamborough and her daughters to meet Lady Latimer, as she had some vague hope that the natural attraction between a great party on the one side, and handsome girls on the other, might be ripened into a state of things, which might prevent so lukewarm a politician as Lord Latimer from taking an active part against Oakley.

“ You are not yet acquainted with Lady Latimer,” said Lady Boretton to Germain, as her eye once more glanced over the few careless traces of that lady’s pen, which wandered, surrounded by roses and cupids, over the shining surface of her smooth and scented note-paper.

“ No, I never had the pleasure of seeing her,” replied Germain, “ and shall be most happy in this opportunity of meeting one, of whom all who know her speak in raptures.”

“ Oh, certainly,” said Lady Boretton, “ a

most delightful person ; a little, perhaps—” added she, lowering her voice, “ a little perhaps spoilt by the world. You have seen Lady Flamborough—well, you may imagine the sort of education that she would give her daughters. Lady Latimer, with all her acknowledged attractions, is singularly superficial, and wants mind, poor thing ; and what, my dear Mr. Germain, is social intercourse without mind ?—Would you believe it, when I asked her to attend Professor —’s lectures with me, she said, she was much obliged to me, but she slept very well without them ; and when I wished to introduce to her a friend of mine, who had just written a beautiful book, she said—not unless she could shut him up when she liked. Depend upon it, you will find Lady Latimer wants mind. Mr. Alley, I believe the laboratory is ready.”

With this Lady Boretton, left Germain, who had

not been so fascinated with what he had seen of her, as not to receive with some reservation of his own opinion, the disparaging account she had given of Lady Latimer.

Strolling into the library in search of a book, he met Lady Flamborough, who had been, she said, to choose some drawings for the girls to copy for her.

“ You don’t know Louisa—Lady Latimer, I mean—do you, Mr. Germain ? ” said she.

Germain again replying in the negative, and again repeating his desire to be able to answer in the affirmative, she continued, whilst she slowly turned over the contents of the portfolio she had been seeking :—“ Oh, of course you may imagine, Mr. Germain, how gratifying to a mother’s feelings must be the universal admiration she engrosses, and indeed even I must be allowed to add it is her due. She is reckoned very like Jane ; to be sure Madame

Maradin says, Jane has much the finest figure, but then, Louisa is not so very young as her sister is. I should say too, that Jane has the most countenance, but then, perhaps, I am not quite a fair judge—I may speak, you know, from a mother's knowledge of their character, but in my opinion, Jane's face shows the most sensibility of expression. If any thing, perhaps, Louisa rather wants countenance. Here it is—Guercino's Sybil. Good morning, Mr. Germain."

The weather continuing threatening after luncheon, the gentlemen guests of Boretton Park, limited their afternoon's exercise to a critical stroll through that part of the place which was near the house. One friend of Sir John's found out, that unless his hot-houses, which had just been finished at an enormous expense, were built upon quite a different principle, they would never be fit to ripen even a

crab-apple ; one that his thriving and extensive plantations ought all to be cut down, or the place would be too damp for any thing but frogs ; another, that the house must be pulled down, and rebuilt in the snug bottom by the trout-stream ; one discovered that his new stables were not large enough for dog-kennels ; another, that if he had the misfortune to possess such a set of rips as tenanted them, he would turn them all loose rather than that they should cost him another feed of corn ; and, as the mizzling rain drove them home, all agreed, whilst they were ascending the broad and easy steps under the shelter of the splendid portico, which marked the centre of the extended façade, that they would not live in such a dirty, damp, dreary hole, if any body would give it to them.

As two long dusky hours yet remained before dinner, and they had already settled the local demerits of every thing by which they were sur-

rounded, it was but natural that they should next occupy themselves with the personal qualifications of those who were about to be added to their number; and as Germain wandered about the different corners of the spacious hall in which they were assembled, various were the little disparaging comments upon both Lord and Lady Latimer which he heard; and though there were none of them of any great importance, yet the avidity with which they were retailed, seemed to him at variance with that deference which he had always heard was paid to them by the society collectively in which they moved; for he did not as yet know enough of the world to be aware that though from any fashionable pre-eminence which made a person conspicuous, it naturally followed that he or she should be often talked of, yet praise by no means followed as a necessary consequence.

On one side, he heard that Latimer was an

excellent fellow, but he certainly had done some very odd things—it was a pity! one knew for certain that Lady Latimer rouged; another was quite sure that her foot was not so small as the far-famed one of a celebrated actress. A little further on he found Major Sumner sentimentalizing upon “the unfeeling manner in which she had behaved to his poor friend Colonel Woodbine, who though a most gallant officer, as brave as a lion in the field, was of an unfortunately susceptible nature, and after flirting desperately with him at Brighton, she cruelly cut him when next they met. Poor Woodbine!” added the major, “if it had not been to get over the impression her conduct made upon him, I don’t think that he would ever have gone upon the expedition which proved fatal to him.”

“Where did he go to?” asked Germain; “the tropic or the polar regions?”

“No,” said Major Sumner, “he went duck-shooting in the fens, and got his feet wet. Well, depend upon it, Lady Latimer has no heart.”

Except Germain, almost every body seemed to have some anecdote of Lord or Lady Latimer to contribute, derived from their personal knowledge of them. There were only two other persons in the room, who, it was evident, were not acquainted with either of them; one was a literary protégé of Lady Boretton’s, who had lately written a novel in which a character of Lady Latimer had been insinuated, and the other was a friend of his, a periodical critic, who had persuaded the world of the striking resemblance the character bore to the original.

Any further comments were interrupted by the entrance of lights, which produced a challenge from Fitzalbert to Germain to the billiard-table, that stood in the centre of the spacious hall. Germain did not hesitate on accepting the pro-

posal, though his attention was still much occupied with all he had lately heard, and his curiosity much excited to find out how far his own impressions would confirm it. "Wants mind—countenance—and heart," thought he, whilst apparently engrossed in choosing his cue.

Germain played well at billiards; Fitzalbert perhaps rather better; but this point had not been decided even as far as the first game, and there was still uncertainty enough about the event, to give interest to the various little bets that had been accumulating as they proceeded, when the grinding of carriage-wheels through the gravel announced an arrival, and the expected guests were ushered in due form through the front door. Germain involuntarily paused, even in the act of taking aim at a dead hazard, in spite of sundry requisitions from those around him to "go on, go on; I've backed you to do this."

Of all the sights and wonders of the world, there is hardly any which one cannot so completely anticipate in idea, by the exertion of a very ordinary share of imagination, as almost to incur disappointment upon actual inspection. To this general rule there is one brilliant exception. A perfectly beautiful woman when first seen, is sure to present some charm which far exceeds any pre-conceived expectation. Such was the impression made upon Germain when raising his head from the billiard-table he first beheld Lady Latimer. She entered, followed by Lord Latimer, and leading on the other side a third and unexpected visitor, whose embarrassment she seemed to be endeavouring to lessen. So thoroughly was this third person protected against the damps of an autumnal evening, that it was impossible for the most critical eye to decide more, than that the little she showed of her face seemed pleasing, and the

still less that was seen of her figure appeared young.

As Lady Boretton advanced from an opposite door to meet her guests, Lady Latimer introduced this unexpected addition as “her particular friend, Miss Mordaunt, rather out of health —wrote on purpose to ask to be allowed to bring her, and quite forgot to mention it in that stupid hurried note.”

Lady Latimer evidently thought that she had said more than enough on the subject, and turning aside to address some one else, lost Lady Boretton’s embarrassed and therefore embarrassing reply, which was in words that “she was always too happy to see any friend of hers,” but which in tone rather implied that her house was more than full. It seemed, indeed, to be so felt by the young lady herself, and proportionably to increase that shyness which had been at first evident, so as to prevent her debar-

rassing herself of the various wraps which completely concealed her from general observation.

“ Oh ! on no account let me interrupt so interesting a game,” said Lady Latimer, finding that such a proposal had been made by Germain, and objected to by some of the others. “ I mean, with Lady Boretton’s permission, to stay and warm my fingers at this fire for more than sufficient time for you to decide it.”

So commanded, Germain resumed his cue, and as he sometimes played with great execution, made a brilliant stroke. “ I’ll bet any one five to four on the stick,” said Sir Gregory Greenford, who had arrived that morning.

“ I’ll take it five-and-twenty to twenty,” said Lord Latimer, in the mildest tone, and with the most careless manner, his quick eye having observed that Germain played by no means a safe game. Accordingly, his next stroke was a failure. Fitzalbert made much of a see-saw

losing hazard at the middle pocket. When that was worn out, and whilst Germain in his turn was taking a deliberate aim, he heard Lady Latimer inquiring who he was. He involuntarily raised his eye from the table and met hers—

“Who says she wants countenance?” thought he; and with that thought he played—missed his adversary’s ball—holed his own—lost the game—Lady Latimer retired to dress—and Lord Latimer pocketed Sir Gregory Greenford’s poney.

CHAPTER IX.

I will instruct my sorrows to be proud,
For grief is proud, and makes his owner stout.

SHAKSPEARE.

“AND what has become of Mr. Oakley since his late acquisition?” was one of the first questions Lady Latimer asked of Germain. Perhaps the reader may share her ladyship’s curiosity upon that subject, and may wish for more detailed information than Germain had then an opportunity of giving in reply.

It was impossible for any two places to be more different in every respect than those to which Oakley had succeeded by the same event—Rockington Castle and Goldsborough Park; the first of which had been subject to all the caprices arising from the actual presence of its late strange proprietor; the other had enjoyed the benefit of the delegated authority of a more rational agent. If the farms upon the Goldsborough estate, when accidentally vacant, were always in the greatest request amongst agriculturists; if the relations between landlord and tenant were here so well understood as for the two parties to be convinced that their interests were concurrent, not conflicting—this was entirely owing to the excellent management of Mr. Gardner, who conducted affairs in Lord Rockington's name quite differently from the way in which he would have conducted them himself, and therefore as beneficially as possible. He

was indeed one of the best specimens of a practical agriculturist; a perfect knowledge of his subject being joined with an anxious desire to do the best for his employer, an endeavour that was more likely to be successful, as he was free from the blind ignorance and self-interest combined which are apt to defeat their own object. The park was perfectly well kept up, as were the rest of the grounds, gardens, &c.; and the house, though a small one, had always been used by Mr. Gardner as his own residence, was in perfect repair, and fit for immediate habitation.

There was something in all this, which Oakley could not understand; for, as he approached the place, leaning back in his post-chaise, and brooding over past events and future prospects, the one thing that he had settled in his mind as quite beyond dispute, was, that the uncontrolled agent of such a

property as Goldsborough must be a rogue. He had contrived several cunning devices, by which he would detect him if he was a clever rogue, and had rather enjoyed the idea of the summary expulsion he would inflict if he should be a palpable scoundrel.

But, in spite of all this prepossession, there was a frankness in Mr. Gardner's first *abord* which puzzled him, till he succeeded in persuading himself that it must arise from the consummate assurance of long-undetected villainy. Having accepted Mr. Gardner's offer of using his servants, &c. till the arrival of his own establishment, it was still with jaundiced eyes that Oakley witnessed the little comforts of this contented man's adopted home, all of which he looked upon as so many fraudulent appropriations out of what ought to have been his inheritance. Even Mrs. Gardner's self-satisfied allusion to her scientific

care of the garden, he perverted into a bare-faced acknowledgment that she had made the most of it. In riding the boundaries with Mr. Gardner, the friendly greeting which that gentleman received from every one they met, arising from a long experience of kind and neighbourly offices at his hands, Oakley attributed to the intimacy arising from the common partnership in his spoils.

“ That piece of rising ground, with that oak grove upon it facing your house, is freehold property, Mr. Oakley,” said Mr. Gardner; “ it would be a very desirable acquisition to you, and is at present upon sale.”

“ Not mine? to be sure it ought to be. To whom does it belong?” inquired Oakley.

“ The proprietor is an acquaintance of mine; indeed, a sort of connexion of Mrs. Gardner’s.”

“Hum!” said Oakley, who was now convinced he saw through it all.

“The ground is, fairly speaking, worth some more years’ purchase to you than to any one else.”

“Hum!” repeated Oakley.

“Perhaps, as it is shortly to be put up to auction, and the affair therefore presses, you would authorize me to offer, which I could easily do, something more than what, at a fair valuation, it might be worth to an indifferent person.”

“Not the fraction of a farthing, Mr. Gardner,” answered Oakley.

Mr. Gardner, though rather surprised, thought he had done his duty, and dropped the subject, which was never resumed between them. How far Oakley’s suspicious nature was here an advantage to him, will hereafter be seen.

It was in such a state of mind, pampered too with fond indulgence, whilst chewing the cud of such congenial food as twenty years un-audited accounts afford, that Germain found his friend, when Fitzalbert, on his way to Boreton Hall, dropped him at the park-gate. It was no wonder then, that Germain did not prolong his visit beyond the one night he had originally intended, but hastened to rejoin more lively society; and Oakley remained some time longer undisturbed in trying to detect fresh grounds for suspicion.

There were some circumstances, connected with one of the annual items contained in Mr. Gardner's accounts, which might have been supposed to require explanation even by a more candid or careless auditor than Oakley. This was a yearly sum of 500*l.* mentioned as paid over by order of Lord Rockington to a banker at

a neighbouring country town. Now it so happened that this banker was also a connexion of Mrs. Gardner's, which was found out by Oakley from his bearing the same name with the gentleman who owned the freehold. Mr. Gardner, however, protested utter ignorance of the purpose to which the money was applied, the banker never having communicated with him on the subject. But, on the other hand, he could produce no other authority for the annual payment, than that he had been desired by his predecessor to continue what he represented himself as having been ordered by Lord Rockington to do. He had once endeavoured to obtain from Lord Rockington more precise instructions on this, as well as other subjects, but the only reply he received consisted of these words:—" Communicate with me only in figures—not letters." " As to this payment, it

will now be my duty," said Mr. Gardner, " to obtain for you all the information in my power —to-morrow I should have had to make a quarterly remittance of it. I will at the same time make the necessary inquiries."

" Stop it, and say nothing. If this leads to explanation, 'tis well; if not, I shall know what to infer."

This happened a few days previous to Germain's visit. A few days more had passed after it: nothing had been heard with regard to the stopped annuity, and Oakley was beginning to feast upon the certainty that he had detected Mr. Gardner in barefaced appropriation, when a packet, in a woman's hand, was forwarded to him from Messrs. Maxwell's office, and it was with no small surprise that he read as follows:—

" It is only from an anxious desire to ensure a patient perusal of what I have to commu-

nicate, and from no vain hope of avoiding the bitter humiliation which this act must entail upon the writer, that I have many times thrown down my pen dissatisfied with any attempt even at opening the subject. Utterly unknown as I am to you, I feel that you may be as little disposed to believe, as I am to mention as a boast, that if the utter destitution of *myself* alone was effected by the stoppage of the annuity you have withdrawn, I should a thousand times have preferred a silent acquiescence to saying what I have to say. But it is one of the difficulties of the appeal I have to make to you, that founded as it must be, upon the disclosure of disgraceful facts, I have no right to blend them with the assumption of credit for those better feelings, which under other circumstances, I trust you would not be disposed to refuse.

“ The person who is attempting to muster

courage sufficient to send you this paper, though the daughter of a general officer in the British army, is not a native of these islands, but of a very different climate, and educated in a very different society from that to which her father's rank might have entitled her, had he remained at home. It was in one of our distant colonies that I was born, and it was as the idol of its small circle, that I was brought up. I need no further disclaim any vestiges of vanity as to the personal admiration I then excited, than by owning, that it is now twenty years since I first began to overrate their value. I owe no gratitude to that which was the cause, first of my union with a man older than my father, one of the principal government officers of the colony, and afterwards of all my subsequent errors and disgrace.

“ But, though with a feeling far removed from pride, I must, (to enable you at all to

comprehend what I have to say,) acknowledge that for many giddy years I reigned in undisputed possession of the admiration of all the small society in which I moved. Lord Rockington's appointment as governor, which followed some political movements which had passed utterly unheeded by me, was an event which seemed likely completely to change the state of society in the settlement. His arrival had been preceded by that of many officers and their wives and daughters, belonging to the enlarged staff which his appointment entailed.

“ Amongst these ladies, to my surprise, I found, not only pretensions of declared rivalry, but an air of decided superiority, founded upon their arrival from Europe. You have never seen, you cannot imagine, the rancorous jealousies to which an insulated settlement is subject. There are many virtues honourable to

human nature, which are peculiarly found in such a state of society; but it is also impossible to conceive by what trifles the worst passions are there excited.

“ The new state of things produced by these recent additions to the society, had almost frenzied my frivolous mind, when the arrival of Lord Rockington himself again completely revolutionized every thing. It pleased him from the first, to single me out as the undisputed leader of the courtly circle by which he was surrounded. What he then was, and how far the undisguised homage of such a man was calculated to fascinate a foolish weak woman, who had never before even seen any one of his distinguished rank and reputation, I will not pretend to plead; there are, if fame be not more than usually false, in more exalted circles, living witnesses of his seductive arts. But, shame upon me! the mere recall-

ing of events so long past, seems to have conjured up with it all those bad feelings I had hoped were for ever eradicated.

“ Let me escape any further detail of, or comment upon this part of my subject. I had no excuse; I could not call it love—all the evil passions of my nature, for a while united in their victory over better feelings and principles. The intoxication was short-lived: my husband, who had been absent in a distant part of the colony, abruptly returned. His suspicions were excited, and eagerly confirmed by those whose envy had been kindled by my guilty elevation. My innocent child, my only comfort, was born but to be denounced and disclaimed by its legal parent. My disgrace, of course, immediately followed, and was but the forerunner of the ruin of that distinguished individual, who had rather dazzled my imagination, and triumphed over my passions, than won my

heart. My husband was one of the principal instigators of his threatened impeachment: in the excited state of our disorganised society, there were plenty found to back his accusations; whether they were well-founded or not, is out of my power to decide; it is sufficient to remember, that they were successful; and it is but justice to him to say, that even whilst writhing under that degradation, which his proud spirit must have rendered insupportable, the arrangements of that allowance which you have stopped, was the last act which showed sympathy with his kind.

“ Now, Mr. Oakley, if in what I have related you have seen any symptom of a weak desire to extenuate my guilt, or to work upon your feelings, by finding out subtle excuses for my conduct—then heed not the earnest appeal I am about to make, not for myself, but for one whom I should not, even after another

twenty years of bitter repentance, be worthy to describe as she deserves,—the best, kindest, and most affectionate of daughters. But if you can enter into the bitter feelings of humiliation, with which I have avowed myself to an utter stranger such as I was, then perhaps you will credit the assurance, that the fatal errors of my own early life have not been without their due impression, and that the harrowing recollections derived from them have been but another incitement, to instil better principles into the willing mind of her, who has the misfortune to owe her being to me.

“ What the circumstances of her birth were, I am sure you will think I have not done wrong in concealing from my innocent girl. To assume a fictitious name, was a necessary consequence of that concealment. That thus unexplained, she has borne with the utmost cheerfulness, and without ever repining, that life

of solitude, to which I have always adhered, is one of the least of her virtues. Accident made her acquainted with a lady, whose friendship her merits obtained her. That at that lady's request I have allowed her, under her protection, to leave me for a while to mix in that society she is so calculated to adorn, I now feel to have been my greatest error in regard to her; for Helen would never submit to move in the world as a dependent beggar. My only excuse is, that at the time I so permitted her, from the mystery with which your uncle's affairs have long been conducted, I was ignorant that the provision he had made for his child was not legally settled.

“ I have finished my irksome task. I have confined myself, as much as the agitation of my feelings would allow, to a statement of facts. I make no request; but hope that at least you will understand the motive of this

intrusion by her, who has long been known only as

“EMILY MORDAUNT.”

This appeal was, on many accounts, peculiarly calculated to excite Oakley’s sympathy. Candour was a quality, the existence of which he was often inclined to dispute, but that once acknowledged, no one was more ready to do justice to its value. The utter absence of any attempt at self-justification on the part of Mrs. Mordaunt, which in her case arose spontaneously from the habitual discipline of a contrite spirit, would, even if only artfully assumed, have been the best method to win his favourable attention.

The idea too, of scrupulously attending to the wishes of his late uncle, would at the present moment, independent of any other consideration, have been one of the most powerful

incentives to action. He wished in person to have explained, and apologised to Mrs. Mordaunt for the temporary stoppage of the annuity, but on communicating through Messrs. Maxwell his desire to do so, he found that it was an effort she wished to be spared.

He lost no time however, in directing that the settlement should be made legally binding on himself, and grumbled not a little at the delay in the execution of his orders, caused by the cramp movements of his lawyer's fingers, in whose hands the most volatile quill ever plucked from the feathered tribe, would have lost all its former winged properties. Certain it is, that his better feelings had been roused by the appeal that had been made to them. He recurred with satisfaction to the part it had enabled him to act; and whilst he remained in his present solitude, even in the midst of a doubtful "dot and carry one" in a disputed account,

an indistinct vision would sometimes cross him of a figure, in whose features the fine outlines of his uncle's portrait were softened into feminine loveliness, and whose gentle eyes beamed with gratitude to her benefactor.

CHAPTER X.

—A wife whose words all ears took captive,
Whose dear perfections hearts that scorn'd to serve,
Humbly called Mistress.

SHAKSPEARE.

LADY LATIMER and her protégée were left retiring to dress, and according to generally-established precedent, a full and detailed account ought to be given of the successful result of their labours. But will my fair readers pardon a poor author who owns that it is the dread of their disgust which makes him shun an attempt by which some ignorantly suppose that their

favour is easiest won ? For though he hopes that, utterly unskilled as he is in these mysteries, he still might manage to avoid such glaring mistakes as those made by some self-constituted authorities on these subjects, who have scandalized the taste of the sex, and volunteered a display of their own ignorance by a description of their heroine either by daylight in the dog-days in a superb dress of rich black velvet, or shining amid December snows in flowing drapery of the finest white muslin ; yet even avoiding this Scylla and Charybdis, the writer of these pages is aware he is on dangerous ground. Though he might escape any such flagrant error at the present moment, many months may yet intervene before this meets the public eye ; and as he has, like other such ephemeral creatures, his own little unacknowledged hopes of a sort of indefinite immortality, he cannot bear the idea that if he should now so commit himself, when

the next return of spring shall enable the universally admitted arbitress of taste to hold her annual court at Longchamp, even on that very day every pretty pair of Parisian eyes would be averted in contempt from this antiquated and old-fashioned page, and as a necessary consequence, as fast as the post could convey the *Journal des Modes*, that contempt would become universal, not falling alone, as it ought, on his devoted head, but what is of infinitely more consequence, being unjustly shared by the ladies whom he would have thus arbitrarily condemned still to wear the fashions of the bygone year.

He hopes therefore that no more will be expected of him than vaguely to assure his readers that when Lady Latimer had exchanged her travelling-dress, the success of her toilet was justly the admiration of the brilliant circle she found re-assembled to meet her; and that as she

was far above any low idea of rivalry, much more than the care which she had bestowed upon her own appearance, had been lavished upon that of the pretty interesting girl who accompanied her, and upon whom she had forced many of her own newest and most becoming ornaments.

Fitzalbert loudly protested that it quite refreshed him to see for the first time any thing so singularly attractive as Miss Mordaunt; but Germain had eyes for no one but Lady Latimer; he had predetermined that she would be the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. Nature certainly had been a party to this predestination, and the charm of those perfections which she had borne from her birth was enhanced by that allurement of manner which cannot be described. Combined with the most perfect propriety of deportment, there was, when she pleased, a softened expression in her bright

eye, a subdued tone in her musical voice, which, unmarked by all else, conveyed to him whom she addressed, an irresistible impression of interest.

The effect of this was not lost upon Germain, to whose evident admiration she was by no means insensible. He was good-looking, agreeable, and well-informed, and his newness in the ways of the world was rather an additional merit, when freed from the first incrustation of *mauvaise honte*, which her easy, gentle manners soon contrived to remove.

He was a welcome neighbour to her at dinner, for from the first she had looked forward to her visit to the Boretos as an unpleasant duty, and the set she had found assembled had, with few exceptions, confirmed that expectation. Fitz-albert to be sure was one of her intimates, but then it was the intimacy of indifference. He too seemed for the present very sufficiently occu-

pied in attempting to overcome the diffidence of her young friend, Miss Mordaunt.

Meantime Lady Latimer's rapidly-ripening acquaintance with Germain suffered no check from her other neighbour, Sir John, who, after he had asked her whether she drank wine or liked a screen, offered no further interruption. Where all this while was the anxious eye of Lady Flamborough, whose worst fears seemed confirmed as to the engrossing nature of her daughter Louisa's love of admiration? It reposed with some sort of consolation upon the juxtaposition of Lady Caroline and Sir Gregory Greenford, whose unexpected arrival that day had already, as has been noted above, cost him a *poney*, and now seemed to have exposed him to a renewal of these manœuvres on Lady Flamborough's part, which the abrupt termination of the London season had inopportunely interrupted.

At the opposite end of the table Lord Latimer and Lady Boretton were mutually engaged with equal art in avoiding to say what they really thought upon a very interesting subject, which had been indiscreetly brought upon the tapis by the literary gentleman from London, unluckily ignorant as he was of county politics. This was no less an event than the long-expected advertisement from Mr. Medium, announcing his intention, on account of increasing infirmities, of taking the earliest opportunity of retiring from the representation of the county.

“ So,” said the Londoner, “ I see that you are likely to have a vacancy for the county—Who is expected to succeed Mr. Medium?”

This was a most important question, upon which both Lord Latimer and Lady Boretton had settled in their own minds to meditate much, consult cautiously, decide deliberately, and after all this to communicate formally to

each other their separate determinations: instead of which they were summarily required in each other's presence to give an off-hand answer. It was impossible to affect deafness, for though a moment before the clatter and chatter of knives, forks, and tongues, had seemed eternal, just then there had occurred one of those unaccountable pauses which sometimes cause a sudden calm, so that much more gentle tones than those of the pragmatical gentleman who had made the inquiry would have been very sufficiently audible.

Lord Latimer had just drank a glass of wine with Lady Boretton, so that even this ready resource to turn the conversation was no longer open. Luckily, he who had caused the dilemma came to their relief, for not receiving a ready answer to his question, he proceeded with the subject for the sake of introducing which he had propounded it, a critical analysis of poor Mr. Me-

dium's advertisement ; where, to be sure, for so constitutional a statesman, some sentences were cruelly burdened with a “dead weight” of adverbs and adjectives : and pronouns were arbitrarily entrusted with authority over considerable portions of the address, which are usually supposed in such a case to be themselves governed by a verb.

“ It is,” continued the critic, “ a sufficient proof of the inaccuracies tolerated in our legislative assemblies, that a gentleman who had passed his whole life there, should at this time, being resigning, not have learnt to write better.”

Lord Latimer could not help remarking, in an under tone to Lady Boretton, that a person *being* criticizing might have learnt to avoid the worst innovation in the style of modern times. He then continued aloud for fear the critical

gentleman should again become curious: "Poor Medium, he certainly never was much of a purist."

"And yet I doubt," rejoined Lady Boretton, "whether he ever read any book more at a sitting, than others do of a dictionary."

"Or even of a newspaper," added Lord Latimer, "than just to see whether the stupid editor had made any mistake in the name of the cover where his hounds were advertised to meet."

"Well, and what can be more provoking than such a mistake?" said Sir Gregory. Lord Latimer, and Lady Boretton, both felt satisfied that they had succeeded in turning the subject—half the party were soon in full cry with Mr. Medium's hounds, and engaged in the more interesting enquiry, who was to succeed to them, as chronic gout, and rheuma-

tism, were likely to incapacitate the sufferer from his duties as much in the field as in the House.

But though for the present, the necessity of explanation had been avoided, it did not the less impress both parties with the conviction that something ought soon to be settled on the subject. To induce Oakley to come forward, was, as has been stated before, Lady Boretton's best hope, Sir John's insignificance or nonentity being by none more feelingly acknowledged than her ladyship. She had already had the proposal hinted to Oakley, in a manner that she thought the most likely to be attended with success.

Of all the various propositions that can be made to a young man in his situation, there is none as to the motives of which he is so likely to be deceived, or to overrate the advantages of an offer of support, should he be induced to

come forward as a popular candidate at a contested election. All Oakley's defects too, whether of temper or disposition, which made him feel uncomfortable in many of the relations of private life, were so many additional incentives to seek distinction in public, and to make politics his resource. In principle he was a decided advocate for universal liberty, tempered only so far as common sense told him restraint was necessary ; but as he was prepared to carry with him, in whatever character he appeared, the same uncompromising contempt for the opinions of any individuals who differed with him, he was more likely to acquire the somewhat sterile fame of a most unbending patriot, than to be a useful partner in promoting any practical benefit to his country.

However, his exalted station in the county, unblemished character, and commanding talents, made it obvious that a more eligible

candidate could not be put forward by any party. The zeal and sincerity of his attachment to the popular side marked him as worthy the choice of the people, if his reserve, hauteur, and coldness, in the intercourse of private life, could be so far subdued as to induce him to take the necessary steps towards obtaining their suffrages. Such as he was, however, Lady Boretton was determined to do her best to bring him in; and he had so far acceded to the arrangement, as to consent to join the present mixed party at Boretton Hall, whose places, as they gradually dropped off, were to be filled by more decided county partizans; and the probable success of the attempt, should he come forward, was then to be discussed amongst them.

As to Lord Latimer, his plans were by no means so far matured as Lady Boretton's. Politics were with him by no means so first-rate a

pursuit. He had succeeded to a situation in the world which necessarily entailed a considerable degree of political influence ; this he certainly thought it his duty not to abandon, but besides that, the overweening indolence which has been mentioned as obscuring his talents, made him dislike trouble of any kind : but he was, when he could persuade himself to think at all on the subject, by no means an illiberal Tory.

When the question was publicly put as to who was to succeed Mr. Medium, he would have disliked hearing uncontradicted any radical nomination of Lady Boretton's, lest he should be supposed tacitly to concur in it ; yet there were many reasons likely to prevent his taking an active part in thwarting her arrangements.

“ Our new neighbour, Mr. Oakley, has promised us the pleasure of his company to-mor-

row," said Lady Boretton, carelessly, to Lord Latimer, having first carefully so separated this remark from the previous conversation as to prevent his suspecting that the visit was connected with the object of that inquiry. But she need not have feared any such inference on Lord Latimer's part, for the mention of Mr. Oakley in the character of their new neighbour gave quite a different turn to his thoughts, and first brought to his recollection the disputed moors above Peatburn Lodge, which had lately been out of his mind, partly from his not having himself been out on the 12th of August, and partly from his thoughts having till lately been much engrossed by important annual business at Doncaster races. It now, however, occurred to him, that in consequence of the transfer of the Rockington property to new hands, a favourable opportunity was likely to arise of effecting an exchange which would

remove the offensive intrusion of another man's ground into one of his best beats.

It so happened, therefore, that though dinner had not promised much pleasure to any of the party, almost all arose from the table with agreeable impressions uppermost in their minds. Lady Boretton anticipated in Oakley an uncompromising patriot; Lord Latimer an accommodating sportsman; Lady Flamborough's satisfaction was divided between the actual presence of Sir Gregory Greenford and the expected arrival of Oakley, who might, she now thought, do still better for Jane than Germain. The literary lion had had an opportunity of haranguing, and Sir John had not been expected to talk, a state of things that was mutually satisfactory.

Lady Latimer and Germain had been reciprocally pleasing and pleased; and as for Fitz-albert and Miss Mordaunt, it would be diffi-

cult to say which had most puzzled and perplexed the other. That a young person like Helen Mordaunt, to whom society was perfectly strange, should be dazzled and bewildered by Fitzalbert's flow of conversation, was not to be wondered at; but on his part he found it difficult to determine what could be her undeniable attraction. "Is it," thought he, "merely because she is a remarkably pretty girl, with a very distinguished air?" That it partly arose from her being so perfectly natural, never occurred to him as an additional solution of the difficulty.

CHAPTER XI.

Then she plots, then she ruminates, then she devises; and what they think in their hearts they may effect, they will break their hearts but they will effect.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE intercourse of society is maintained by a sort of tacit compact between the few who are determined to have their own way, and the many who consent to allow it them. If it were not thus, there would be numberless contests about things very little worth the trouble of contention. Of course, in these two classes there are various degrees,

and he who leads in one society will follow in another. But I am alluding only to that temper of mind which disposes a man, when among his equals, to drive or be driven; as one of these relative positions sounds much pleasanter than the other, one would imagine that it would be desired by every one who could attain it.

This, however, is far from being the case. Nor is the right to have one's own way, and the power of making others acknowledge it, founded on any well-grounded claim. It is generally a matter of unaccountable assumption on the one part, and concurrent concession on the other.

To be such a privileged person seems to depend merely upon a man's own taste and temper; and to the success of the attempt it is only necessary that some sort of passport should be possessed which secures admission into society, and prevents another's power of "cutting dead,"

an alternative that would, if possible, be gladly adopted by all; but this danger avoided, the enjoyments of sheer selfishness seem manifold. Wherever such a person goes, the ninety and nine easily satisfied guests are neglected, to study the price of him who is hard to please; he may indulge uncontradicted in infinite paradox, any thing being considered preferable to endless dispute. If after a course of such studied indulgence, he should condescend to be agreeable, every one is at once in ecstacies of gratitude, exclaiming; "How very delightful Mr. So-and-so, can be!" whereas, if a systematically good-natured man is ever provoked, by an unlucky concurrence of circumstances, to commit himself by losing his temper, he is sure never to hear the last of it.

But the privileged person is not without some little drawbacks upon the advantages of his situation, sitting as he does like an incubus

upon the spirits of society: he finds himself artfully omitted from any very pleasant party; and if chance should ever cause him to linger near an open door, or any such social trap for sincerity, he is not unlikely to hear himself talked of without that restraint which the love of a quiet life, and the dislike of a needless quarrel, felt by all prudent people, may have caused in his presence.

Oakley was as yet by no means sufficiently known to have established himself irrevocably in either of these classes, but the character which he had acquired at college, and rather confirmed by the report of the few persons whom he did not succeed in avoiding at Paris, was that of “a stiff sort of fellow, whom it was very difficult to make out; clever enough, certainly, but with nothing off-hand about him.”

This opinion, which had originally been thus

elegantly expressed by some jolly companions, for whom he had not attempted to conceal his contempt, had been substantially repeated with some variation in the terms, whenever his name was subsequently mentioned ; and it was on this that the general expectation in the minds of the party at Boretton Hall, who were awaiting his arrival, was founded. The importance attached to his adventitious acquisitions prevented his being allowed to drop in as an indifferent item in the party ; it became necessary either to reckon upon him as a valuable addition, or to dread him as a bugbear, and the latter alternative was generally adopted.

It was in consequence of this, and the disposition it produced, rather to avoid his neighbourhood, that accident placed him, on the first day of his arrival, by the side of Miss Mordaunt. He had not heard her name, and the resemblance to his uncle, which had he done so could not

have failed to strike him, was not strong enough at once to explain itself to him as the cause of the interest he felt in addressing her. The young lady, though as usual, much engrossed by her other neighbour Fitzalbert, whose ever-ready rattle still amused her, would not agree with him afterwards, that Oakley had by any means, a forbidding countenance, or that his smile at all partook of the nature of a sneer; perhaps this difference of opinion may have arisen from that which passed by the common name of smile, not having been a precisely similar movement of the lips towards these two different persons.

Oakley hastened to inquire of Germain, the name of the young lady who had been sitting next him.

“ Oh,” said Germain, “ it’s Miss —, Lady Latimer always calls her Helen; Miss —— let me see—one never remembers a name when

one is asked. Don't you think Lady Latimer a most beautiful woman?"

"Very handsome, certainly; but for my part, I admire much more the lady she is talking to; there is a great likeness between them, the one without any thing in her hair."

"That's her sister, Lady Jane; a very pretty, and a very delightful person, but not to be compared to Lady Latimer. There is no accounting for tastes. There's Fitzalbert, who sometimes takes strange fancies into his head, says, that he doesn't think either of them as pretty as that Miss Mordaunt."

"Miss Mordaunt?" eagerly inquired Oakley.

"That's the young lady you were inquiring about—Miss Mordaunt; she came here with Lady Latimer, who—"

"One word, Mr. Oakley," said Lady Boretton, coming up between the two friends, and

interrupting the opportunity they would otherwise have had, the one of talking about Lady Latimer, the other of thinking about Helen Mordaunt. If Oakley had been better acquainted with Lady Boretton, he would have had a more adequate horror of the interminable nature of her “one word,” but as it was, he quietly submitted to follow her to a sofa in a remote corner of the gallery, and to confine, as far as possible, his attention to her ladyship’s somewhat digressive confidences on the subject of county polities.

At length, her “one word” having proceeded at the rate of half a word an hour, he was released for the evening; and then, when he retired to his own apartment, the impressions made by the really important communications on the subject of the coming election, which he had been able to extract from Lady Boretton’s somewhat chaffy reasoning, occasionally gave

place to the pleasure he felt at thus unexpectedly meeting one with whom circumstances had already somewhat mysteriously connected him, and whose appearance seemed so well calculated to confirm the predetermined favourable bent of his imagination.

The next morning, after breakfast, Lady Flamborough, having first contrived some occupation for her two unmarried daughters, which should prevent their being in the way, led Lady Latimer to her boudoir, being anxious to have a private interview with her, which she meant should partake of the mixed character of asking advice and giving a lecture. For since Louisa's marriage, and the consequent abrogation of maternal authority on the part of Lady Flamborough, the usual relations between mother and daughter had become a little confused, and the mother was certainly the most to blame for any failure of that filial re-

spect which might have been hers, had she not herself shown that she considered her own claims on that score as inferior to the deference due to Lady Latimer's artificial position in the world.

She had also lost much of her influence over her daughter, from the latter having afterwards discovered some of the little manœuvres by which her mother had attempted to promote her union with Lord Latimer, and as, whatever her other faults might be, she was herself sincere and single-hearted even to an extreme, she could not but feel dislike at the means her mother had employed, even before she became sensible that the end thus attained had far from contributed to her own happiness. Not that one can therefore defend the playful malice with which she sometimes endeavoured to defeat her mother's management for her sisters, for if her opinion of the mischievous effect it

was likely to produce, would not justify her in being the person thus to interfere, it must also be confessed, that her own eager love of admiration was sometimes not without its share in inducing her to make the attempt.

In spite, however, of the little annoyances of this description which she sometimes gave her mother, Lady Flamborough was well aware, that the brilliant éclat of her eldest daughter cast a reflected lustre upon her sisters, and that if she could persuade her, which she had often in vain attempted, to assist her in procuring for them suitable establishments, she would be a most valuable auxiliary in any such scheme.

It was to make one more effort of this kind, as well as to hint, if possible, that she ought not herself to take possession of Germain, that she had summoned her to her boudoir.

“I wished to consult you, my dear,” she began; “but, first let me look at that beau-

tiful cap—Herbault's I perceive. I am not sure, that I quite like the colour of those ribbons."

" It's quite new, however, and aptly entitled, *feu d'enfer*," said Lady Latimer.

" Well, you are certainly looking remarkably well, quite a different thing since I saw you in London ;" kissing a cheek, the brilliancy of whose hue, even the trying neighbourhood of *feu d'enfer* could not injure. " But," added she, " I wished to consult you about Sir Gregory Greenford's attentions to Caroline ; his following her here certainly must mean something."

" Do you think so ? He is generally most inexplicably void of meaning. But, how do you know he followed her ?"

" Oh, who can doubt it ? He must have known that Lady Boretton would never have asked him on any other account : he is not

at all in her line. But what I wished to say is this—that as Sir Gregory is soon going to Newmarket with Lord Latimer, I thought a word, a hint from him on the subject, might do great good."

" My dear mamma, depend upon it, if Latimer takes that opportunity of trying upon Sir Gregory his talents at match-making, it won't be in the *matrimonial* line; and as I don't perceive the advantages of any description that I am to gain from having such a fraternal fool for the rest of my life, you must excuse my interfering in the business."

" Surely you cannot be indifferent to the prospect of such an advantageous establishment for Caroline; for you must recollect, that she is only two years younger than you; and years count quite differently in a girl," added she, observing from a glance Lady Latimer cast at the glass, she did not think her mother's mode

of reckoning judicious. “ Besides, she is not near so generally admired as Jane, who grows more like you every day. As to her, though you do not approve of Sir Gregory Greenford for Caroline, I think you will not have the same objection to Mr. Germain for Jane.”

“ Mr. Germain for Jane!” repeated Lady Latimer, in a tone in which was meant to be expressed that this surpassed even the usual latitude of improbability taken by her mother in these speculations.

“ Yes, before you came every one remarked the evident attention he paid her; and when I asked him last night if he did not see the strong resemblance between you two, you can’t think how confused he was, as he replied that Oakley had just observed it to him. Now, though most worldly mothers would think differently, I would rather see Jane married to Mr. Germain than Mr. Oakley, with all his wealth.

There is something singularly disagreeable to me in that young man. I merely told him, that I had heard so much of the splendour of the late Lord Rockington's jewels, that I should be delighted to see them. 'When they are for sale or rather barter, you shall have the earliest notice,' was his answer. Now, it was not so much what he said, for I don't exactly know what he meant, but there was something in the tone of his voice that was offensive. Your new protégée, Miss Mordaunt, however, did not seem to think so. You know, I never can find fault with any conduct of yours, or else I might say, that it was not very kind to your sisters to bring that girl to a party of this kind as a rival to them. And Fitzalbert, who is certainly losing his good taste, crying her up so ridiculously, is sure to have its effect with all those young men who allow him the trouble of thinking for them."

"Helen wants no such panegyrist," said Lady Latimer warmly; "but make yourself easy, mamma, it shall be my task to take care she does not engross Germain; and as for Mr. Oakley, she is a great deal too good for him. I quite agree with you, that he is one of those whose concurrence is even more grating than some people's contradiction. Latimer wished me to be civil to him, on account of some estate which he wants him to exchange about Peatburn Lodge. Dear pretty Peatburn, shall I ever see you again?" added she, with something approaching to a sigh, "and my poor neglected rosebuds too! Alas! they contained not the only hopes which then blossomed but to fade;" and she paused a moment, as if cherishing the recollection of the sole semblance of domestic happiness she had ever enjoyed.

They had retired there for the shooting sea-

son soon after the expiration of their honeymoon ; and though Lord Latimer was out upon the moors all the morning, he always appeared to return with as much eagerness as he went out ; and if she might then have expected more, she certainly had since experienced less. The unsophisticated sameness of the simple recreations with which she had then contrived to while away his absence, had in her remembrance acquired a charm from all that had since intervened.

“ How happily could I pass all the rest of my life in that secluded dell, only that — ” she paused, but she might have added, “ only that one half of it is predestined to social dissipation in London, the other to dissipated society in the country. If, however, a year should ever be made with thirteen months, she thought she would pass the thirteenth at Peatburn Lodge.

"And now, mamma, as you have no more daughters to marry, you must let me leave you, for Helen will be lost in this strange house, and be wondering what has become of me."

But Helen was not one who ever found any difficulty in occupying herself, and she had been employing the morning very much to her satisfaction in writing to her mother an account of all that had happened since her arrival. And as she never had any concealment from her, she meant to be perfectly explicit in the detail of all her own impressions and feelings, as well as the manners and appearance of others.

In furtherance of this intention, she had certainly recorded many more of Fitzalbert's bad jokes than with a little more knowledge of the world she would have thought worth communicating; nor was it her fault if she was not quite so candid in all she thought of Oakley:

for how could she put upon paper that she fancied, in addressing her, his smile was softer and kinder than that he bestowed upon the rest of the world?—And this was all she had to tell.

CHAPTER XII.

Warwick. I love no colours; and without all colour
Of base insinuating flattery,
I pluck this white rose, with Plantagenet.

Suffolk. I pluck this red rose, with young Somerset,
And say withal, I think he had the right.

SHAKSPEARE.

IT was a few days after the foregoing interview between Lady Latimer and her mother, that Lord Latimer, beckoning Fitzalbert aside after breakfast, communicated to him the unsuccessful result of the request he had made to Oakley to open a negotiation on the subject of the exchange of the moors about Peat-burn Lodge.

“ I never in my life,” said his lordship, “ saw such a cross-grained curmudgeon ; his only answer was, that he felt it his duty to preserve his uncle’s property such as he had left it to him.”—“ But, my dear fellow,” said I, “ this is quite unconnected with all the rest of your property—a useless waste without a house on it. I shall be always most happy to receive you at Peatburn Lodge whenever you like to pay me a visit ; but as to shooting on that ground from your own house, you can no more do it from thence than could your honoured uncle himself from wherever he now is. I own I was wrong to say that, Fitz, but I could not help it, though I felt it at the time. Well, the look it produced from him was one of which I have not seen the like since I got out of the lower school at Eton ; and saying that the reasons of my request were so trivial, that he would not willingly be compelled to

take any thing seriously in the treatment of such a subject, therefore he would only reply that I had his answer — he left the room.”

“A most statesman-like full stop, indeed,” said Fitzalbert. “He fancies he has already got into the House; or perhaps this was only his conciliating manner of asking for your vote and interest.”

“How do you mean?” inquired Lord Latimer; “has he any intention of coming forward in the place of Mr. Medium?”

“I have no doubt on the subject,” replied Fitzalbert. “You know, being no politician myself, I sometimes am, unheeded, allowed to overhear half-expressed confidences on the subject; such as the necessity yesterday enforced by Lady Boretton, of his sitting next the squinting red-haired Miss Martin, (the only daughter of Martin and Co.’s manufactory,) whom they

had brought back with them, after driving over in the morning to see his new steam-mill—rather a suspicious expedition itself—which will end in something more than smoke, depend upon it."

" But I will never give my support to such an unlicked cub—let him mark down all the votes he'll get from me among the barren bogs he is so anxious to keep. A red-hot radical too, I'm told!"

" Yes, and a moderate man like you will find his opinions equally well represented by such a factious firebrand as Oakley, and such a furious bigot as Mr. Stedman, the old member. Well, as I said, I am no politician, but I can't help thinking it but befits a gentleman to move methodically forward with the main body of the age in its regular march of mind, neither seeking foolish forlorn-hopes in advance like Oakley, nor lagging disgracefully

in the rear like old Stedman and those who think with him. I care for none of them. To me the *sans culottes* of the jacobin, and the orthodox *leathers* of the old school, are alike unseemly. You, who are stuck up as a pillar of the state, ought to think more seriously of these things than I, who am but a bit of useless cornice overhanging the surface of society.”

“ Begging your pardon, Fitz, I think the most valuable privilege of ‘a well-deserving pillar’ of the ‘order’ to which I belong, is that which exempts me from thinking any more than if I were stone indeed. The drudges of the lower house are obliged, if not to hear before they decide, at least to wake before they can vote. Many a time has ‘my voice potential, double as the duke’s,’ carried a question, not after a debate in Parliament, but after a rubber at Newmarket.”

“ But I don’t want you to take any further

trouble than just to enter your proxy in the other House too. 'Tis a luxury that belongs to your rank and fortune, as much as a second carriage."

" Well," answered Latimer, " I should have no objection to that, only a county member is an article of rather expensive manufacture ; and that unlucky filly having won the St. Leger makes it a little inconvenient."

" To be sure it's no business of mine," said Fitzalbert, " but I'll tell you a plan that has occurred to me, which you may think on at your leisure. What do you say to Germain ? he has a very good, though not a first-rate property in the county, and plenty of ready money from his long minority ; brought forward on your interest he might succeed without costing you any thing. I don't know much of his political opinions, but I should think they were malleable enough to satisfy you."

This proposal had many recommendations to Lord Latimer; he was in a state of mind very much to enjoy any thing that had a tendency to thwart Oakley; but like most gentlemen who love their ease, he had a great horror of being brought into constant collision with disagreeable people; and it was only the having to do with a person so much to his mind as Germain, that could reconcile him to embarking in such an undertaking. But when he sounded Germain on the subject, under a strict injunction of secrecy, the latter rejected it at once, with more decision than he had previously shown on any occasion; saying that he was himself utterly unfit for it, and that if it was to oppose Oakley, of whose intention of coming forward he had however not been informed, that would be an additional objection.

And thus matters rested for some time. Lord Latimer was satisfied with himself at having

made an effort to overcome his usual inaction in such matters, and went to Newmarket, leaving Lady Latimer to be taken up on his return homewards. This was not an arrangement Lady Boreton had anticipated, though she had herself originated the proposal; in fact, it rather embarrassed her political schemes by keeping up the mixed character of the party; but, on the other hand, it had its advantages; it prevented any suspicion of the existence of an electioneering cabal, and whilst Lady Latimer and Germain were allowed to enjoy each other's society, they were not very likely to interfere with any of the Simpkinses or Jenkinses, who, in the character either of busy agents or officious partisans, were constantly coming to consult Lady Boreton and Oakley.

But the best kept secret will sometimes, as it were, escape under ground, and ooze out at a distance; and that which had remained a mys-

terly carefully concealed from Lord Latimer whilst under Lady Boretton's roof, he found perfectly well known at Newmarket, where Jack Stedman, a relation of the old member, and one of the staunch squirearchy who were determined to defend his seat, took hold of Lord Latimer's button at the moment he was most impatient to hedge some indifferent bets, and let him into the determination of his party in the county, by no means to acquiesce in the nomination of Oakley. Rather than allow him to come in without a contest, they intended to start another of their own friends, to split votes with Mr. Stedman; but as they were not anxious to make the attempt to monopolize the two seats, they were ready to give their second votes to any one who might come forward on Lord Latimer's interest; for though they did not acknowledge him as quite true blue, there was no comparison between the incipient symptoms of

scepticism with which he was afflicted, and the inveterate heresy of such a man as Oakley.

Lord Latimer having paid dearly for these arguments of Jack Stedman, as they prevented his seizing the opportunity to get out of an awkward betting scrape, he thought it as well to make the most of them, and therefore brought them back with him to Boreton Hall, and made use of them in persuading Germain to revise his determination not to come forward himself for the county, telling him that as far as he might have any scruples in opposing Oakley, the present state of affairs ought to remove those, for that it was now obvious that he would not come in without opposition, and if two of the Stedman party united, the run would of course be entirely against him ; whereas he, Lord Latimer, had refused to make any stipulation of mutual support with either party, and provided his own friend succeeded, it was a matter of

indifference to him which of the other two came in.

Germain had been from the first rather more positive in declining the proposal, than decided in his dislike to it ; and even had this feeling been originally stronger, it was not in his nature to resist repeated solicitation, particularly when many of the collateral circumstances, which would necessarily arise from his acquiescence, were every way so agreeable to him ; amongst these, not the least of the advantages which he anticipated, was the confirmed intimacy it must produce with the Latimers.

When, therefore, Lady Latimer's persuasive tones were joined with those of her lord's, in attempting to convince him, he found it impossible any longer to resist ; not that her arguments were very elaborate on the subject, but she not only chose the colours for him, but wore them herself that evening ; and her bright eyes

shone brighter, and her dark hair looked darker from the bows of the *feu d'enfer* ribbons, which she had chosen as becoming to herself, and wore as complimentary to him.

The compunction which Germain might otherwise have experienced at finding himself almost committed in opposition to Oakley, was not a little relieved by the suggestion which he derived from Fitzalbert—whom he consulted on the subject—that if there was any breach of friendship between them, the blame must rest with Oakley himself; the reserve and closeness of whose disposition had prevented his ever communicating his long-formed intentions to his friend and relation, who was living under the same roof with him, and whose property was so situated that his support, if asked, might be of the greatest service to him. “Under these circumstances,” added Fitzalbert, “I think you perfectly at liberty either to affect ignorance of

his project or not, as may best suit your purpose."

But that was not at all Oakley's view of the proceeding, when it accidentally came to his knowledge. He had long necessarily delayed a public declaration of his own intention, principally from a dislike to entering upon the duties of canvassing, which he felt must necessarily follow, and which he looked forward to as the most irksome part of the whole business. Perhaps, too, he had more reasons than he owned to himself for preferring, at present, a protracted stay with the society at Boretton Hall, to riding about, making the agreeable to all the disagreeable people in the county.

The morning after Germain had yielded to the desire of his friends, that he should start as a candidate for the county, Oakley had retired to the writing corner of the library ; he had at last made up his mind to put forth his

public advertisement; somehow or other he had not made any very rapid progress in this production; what the peculiar nature might be of those reveries which had so long kept his pen stationary, need no further be defined, than by owning that the sudden appearance of Helen Mordaunt produced an abrupt transition in his turn of thought.

“ I beg your pardon, Mr. Oakley,” said she, stopping suddenly, “ but I thought it had been Lord Latimer, and I came to ask him to frank this letter to my mother.”

“ Your mother! you write frequently to her,” enquired Oakley, forgetting that Helen was ignorant of that communication between himself and Mrs. Mordaunt, which could alone explain so strange a question from him.

“ Every day since I have been separated from her,” replied Miss Mordaunt. “ When we are together we are all the world to each

other; therefore it would be hard now not to enliven her solitude with a little of my social superfluity, even at the risk of tiring her with my voluminous gossip."

"Valuable, indeed, must be the power to preserve a record of the first impressions made by all she sees upon such a mind as Miss Mordaunt's," said Oakley; "the interest of the source from which your communications are derived, must soften the painful feelings which must otherwise be excited in your mother's mind, to find the world still what she left it—with a ready hand for the buoyant, a heavy heel for the fallen. But," added he, recovering himself as he became aware that he was hinting his knowledge of Mrs. Mordaunt's actual situation, "I am sorry that I cannot assist you with a frank."

"Perhaps before long you may. I don't know whether I should say I hope so—you know I

cannot be against Lady Latimer, and Mr. Germain himself is so good-humoured, that it is impossible not to wish him success in any thing he attempts."

"Mr. Germain!" said Oakley, starting up.
"Can it be possible that he is to be my opponent?"

"Perhaps I have said what I ought not," interrupted Miss Mordaunt, alarmed at his vehemence. "I heard it mentioned without any injunction of secrecy, yet I dare say I have done wrong to repeat it. My own utter ignorance of all such subjects must be my excuse. I can now understand the horror my mother has always expressed at the very name of politics, since an allusion to them from one so innocent of offence as I am, can be capable of producing such an effect."

"Oh, Miss Mordaunt, you are yet so young in years, younger still in the knowledge of the

world ! your gentle nature could not suspect that baseness of which you have unwittingly communicated the most convincing proof. There was but one person I believed incapable of such duplicity, and him I find conspiring to blast the just expectations of his friend."

" Nay, now, Mr. Oakley, surely this is not fair ; ignorant as I am of the subject, I can at least distinguish that what you are contending for is no man's right, but a free object of ambition, open to any one ; and I am sure you will recall your imputation of unfairness, when you reflect that what you did not think fit to communicate to Mr. Germain, he could not be obliged to communicate to you."

" And is it possible Miss Mordaunt should be the apologist of such conduct ? I had a right to keep my counsel. I could not guess at an intention which he had not then formed ;

but he having wormed out my secret, has been working in the dark to counteract my plans."

How far Helen Mordaunt's strong sense of justice would have overcome her dislike to an argument, and have enabled her gentle nature to contend against Oakley's unmeasured vehemence of accusation, whether she would have succeeded in convincing him, for the first time in his life, that he was in the wrong, it is impossible to say, for their interview abruptly terminated by Lady Flamborough's entrance.

"Oh, I beg pardon," said she, "if I interrupt any body. Only to put back this portfolio —very prettily copied, is it not, Mr. Oakley? Miss Mordaunt, my dear, Lady Latimer has been enquiring for you, and she will not guess where to find you, for my girls never come into the library in a morning. You will learn all

that in time. And just tell White to send me down my parasol, and take this other portfolio up to my Caroline, that's a good child."

The disgust with which Oakley listened to this attempt, as he thought it, to treat Miss Mordaunt as a menial dependent, and to employ her as a matter of course in convenient offices, had at once the effect of removing any little feeling of exasperation which his irritable nature might otherwise have preserved after their recent dispute. He advanced hastily towards the door, and opening it just in time for the well laden messenger, the smile with which he greeted her in passing was assurance enough that he retained no unkind recollection of what had occurred between them.

Lady Flamborough, it has been remarked, was not very fond of Oakley; she was also not a little afraid of him, but as she passed him at the door she could not avoid saying: "The

ladies will expect your services after luncheon, Mr. Oakley; they are now but badly off for any gentleman to ride with them; Mr. Germain's sudden departure this morning has left you undisputed master of the field."

"It is neither my wish, nor my ambition, to imitate Mr. Germain, or to interfere with him in any respect," replied Oakley; and that in a tone which made Lady Flamborough repeat to herself, as she shut the door, "Certainly, the most disagreeable young man I ever knew: and yet, that he should have forty thousand a-year, and Mr. Germain at most only eight—what a pity!"

"Left the house already," thought Oakley; "can it be possible that he has actually declared himself?" The doubt which this reflection implied was soon removed by a servant putting into his hand a letter from Germain, which ought to have been given sooner, as it

was left by him when he quitted the house at six o'clock that morning. It was as follows :—

DEAR OAKLEY,

I write this in haste to communicate to you my intention of immediately offering myself as a candidate for the county, at the vacancy which will occur at the approaching general election. I should have preferred announcing it to you in person, but as it was only finally decided last night, and you had disappeared before supper, and Lord Latimer's friends were unanimous in thinking it of the utmost importance, that I should not lose the opportunity of showing myself this morning, being market-day at ——, I could only leave you these few lines. One of the reasons why I should have been glad to explain myself more fully with you first, was, that it has been

rumoured you had some intention of standing yourself; but as this has been some time said, and you have never mentioned it to me, I conclude that the report is unfounded. At any rate, should I be unhappily opposing myself to you, I have the consolation of knowing that you would otherwise have found a more 'stony-hearted adversary;' and I trust I need not assure you, that, consistent with the principles of the party upon whose interest I come forward, you may always depend upon any assistance from

Your faithful friend,

CHARLES GERMAIN.

"Faithful friend indeed! a puppet in the hands of any who please to play upon him," said Oakley.

He read the letter over again, and it enraged him the more; and that not a little, perhaps,

from his being unable exactly to find out what just cause of complaint it opened to him. When our intentions have never been expressed, any interference with them, however injurious, is hardly offensive, and therefore can scarcely be considered criminal by any code of friendship. And though he could not help entertaining a vague suspicion that Germain was really perfectly well aware of his project, as was indeed the case, yet not only had he no proof of this, but even if he had, as he never, by communicating it himself, had established a trust, there was no breach of confidence.

He now bitterly repented that he had not taken Lady Boreton's advice, upon no account to delay declaring himself beyond this identical market-day. He had originally declined doing so from two causes, neither of which he liked to acknowledge : one was, his unwilling-

ness to separate himself from all whom he had met at Boretton Hall ; the other, a jealous dislike whilst he remained there, to be paraded in public, as “Lady Boretton’s new man.” He was very ready to avail himself of that lady’s invaluable exertions in his behalf, but he was very anxious that the distinction should be well understood, that she was engaged in his service, not he in hers.

But whatever relative weight these two reasons might have had in producing this unfortunate delay on his part, they could neither now conceal from him the immense advantage that the start would be to Germain, not only with the freeholders, but with that large portion of the world who would judge between them without knowing much of the merits of the case, and with that larger portion still, who without judging at all, personally preferred

Germain to him. It gave him the appearance of being the aggressor, and of coming in at the eleventh hour, to crush his former friend with the weight of his purse,—“and will not even Helen Mordaunt think so too?” was one of his bitterest reflections.

But if it had been an effort to Helen Mordaunt to attempt to prove him in the wrong to his face, she was sure to think him in the right when left to herself. She then found out ample excuses for his vehemence in the indignation excited in a noble mind by the very idea of duplicity, and all that she could not quite justify in his deportment, was effaced by the recollection of the sweetness of the smile with which he had parted from her. Her natural readiness to oblige, had prevented her from being offended at Lady Flamborough’s air of protection, in sending her as an errand-girl

all over the house; and as Lady Latimer's manner to her was always the perfection of considerate kindness, she had never been made aware of her dependent situation in society.

Admiring Oakley as a sort of superior being, she could not but be gratified at the daily consciousness that his manner to her was different from that he maintained with the rest of the world. She had not yet asked herself the cause of this welcome distinction. Sometimes his indistinct allusions and abrupt questions about her mother bewildered her; for that there could be no personal acquaintance between them, she felt assured from her having herself, till within the last few weeks, remained entirely with her. Could she attribute all that she did not understand in his conduct to the interest with which she had herself inspired him?

She opened her letter to her mother, determined to add—she knew not what. Facts she had none to communicate ; and of fancies, what would one sheet contain ? So she closed it again, sealed, and sent it.

CHAPTER XIII.

And you, that love the Commons, follow me !

SHAKSPEARE.

THE long-expected dissolution of Parliament at length took place. The day of reckoning at length arrived ; and M. P.s of every degree were called to render up an account of their conduct, trembling, lest utter extinction should alone suffice to expiate their various offences of every contradictory kind.

One has assisted to perpetuate unrepealed millions, upon an overtaxed constituency ; another, neglected to procure an exciseman's place for Mr. Jones's wife's second cousin. The name of one is not found in the last list of minorities ; the name of the other was not left with Mr. Mayor last time he was in town. One was squeamish enough to stay away on the night of his patron's pet job ; another has been suspected of joint-stockery. In short, offences of every sort occur to the recollection of those who still hope for a resurrection in the new Parliament ; whilst the desperate shades of departed legislators, for whom there is no hope to rise again, crowd in shoals across (not Charon's ferry, but) the Dover Channel—a destination arising from no longer having the power to put off bills for “ six months,” whether public or private.

And now that legislation is again out of

lease, new bidders start up on every side ; here you may see candidates, like children at puss-in-the-corner, running about in search of a seat ; there, a borough, acting on the principles of free trade, awaiting the offer of a third man. Great is the flight of wise men of the East over the western road, hastening to take their periodical dip in the Cornish mines, whence they may rise re-lackered as legislators ; a process for which that district is peculiarly celebrated. Here you may see an embryo member, who is obliged to spout by the hour, drink by the dozen, kiss by the hundred, squander by the thousand ; whilst his next-door neighbour quietly sends for his friend from London, walks with him to his own summer-house as a town-hall, where they are proposed by his gardener, seconded by his game-keeper, returned by his butler ; who having, as returning-officer, returned his master to the House, returns himself to

the sideboard, and the two new members drink their own healths *tête-à-tête*, over a bottle of claret. And yet, though these two modes of proceeding are somewhat different, the production is the same; and they equally mould members of Parliament, who equally become representatives of the people of England. The choice of a whole city, paved with heads and lined with faces, count but the same as the delegate from four dead walls of an old ruin; nay, like Aladdin's lamp, it is often the old and shabby, dirty and despised, that possess this hidden virtue, which would in vain be sought in new, bright, prosperous-looking possessions of the same kind. A village cobbler in one place, may make members according to his own fancy; he and all about him, even to the very *last*: whilst in another, the employer of hundreds of hands, and the proprietor of a square mile of warehouse, is told, that his in-

terests are very safe in the hands of Squire Somebody, the county member, who thinks commerce unconstitutional, and votes against any change in the Corn Laws.

But, although at the dissection of a dead Parliament, one detects all the rotten parts in the composition of its frame, yet, without disputing that it might be better, it is wonderful how well the machine works when put together; particularly when one considers, that patriotism is no more the unmixed motive of coming there, than that popular election is the means by which it is effected. Mr. Scraggs comes in, because Mrs. Scraggs was afraid that Mrs. Swails should take precedence of her as an M. P.'s lady. One fool wants to frank; another only wishes to go *free* himself. But, perhaps, the reader may think that this analysis may as well be spared of that which is collectively the greatest aggregate of talent, and

the nicest criterion of taste, which the age can produce.

Therefore, to return to one of our heroes—(for though the freeholders of the county will be called on to decide between them, I will not acknowledge a preference for either)—it was at the identical inn where they separated before, that Oakley found himself alone, after a hard day's canvassing. He had begun the day with a brilliant speech at a public meeting, held at one of the principal market-towns in the county. The well-merited applause which his sentiments had there elicited from an admiring audience, had produced a sensation of exultation, which had gradually subsided under the wearisome duties of the subsequent canvas, during the last two hours of which, his even more than ordinary taciturnity had by degrees worn out the attendant friends and agents who had accompanied him; and they had severally

dropped off, with assurances of being punctual at the place of rendezvous on the morrow. His groom too, he had despatched with an important note to an agent. When therefore, from his horse casting a shoe, he found it would be difficult to reach home that night, he determined to take up his quarters at this inn, which was a sort of neutral ground, for being only a single house in one corner of the county, it had not been taken by any of the parties.

Here, it happened, he was not known personally, and it never was suspected that the name which filled every corner of the county paper, could belong to the jaded-looking traveller, who arrived alone, leading a lame horse; and no longer having Germain to claim attention for him, he seemed likely to receive even less of it than formerly from the much more occupied inmates of the inn.

The sight of the room in which he had passed

the last evening of fellowship with the companion of his youth, excited under present circumstances an 'unpleasant train of thought. He was about to enter with him into an eager, if not angry contest; and though this species of public competition is far from necessarily leading to permanent estrangement in private, yet he was too justly distrustful of his own temper and disposition, not to be well aware that his was a soil in which the kindly feelings of our nature are of slow growth, requiring careful culture, and therefore to fear that such matter of exasperation would inevitably arise as must prevent Germain and himself from ever again meeting on those terms on which they had formerly lived. And how was such a friend to be replaced by one of such an unsocial turn as himself?

It has been often truly said, that uniformity of character is by no means necessary or desir-

able in permanent companionship. Germain's mind was fully capable of doing justice to that of his friend, whilst the playful fancy in which his ideas were decked, served to enliven the somewhat sombre colouring which tinged the thoughts of the other ; and the kindly over-flowings of his nature washed away the asperities of Oakley's disposition. And now that these ties were severed, what had he as an equivalent ? Those with whom he at present associated were persons with whom nothing but a community of interest during a moment of political excitement might temporarily connect him. He had that morning, in the course of his public speech, revelled in those abstract theories of philanthropy and patriotism upon which liberal ideas in politics are founded—but what availed these general doctrines, when he sought in vain for an individual link of sympathy which might connect him with his kind ?

True, there was one gentle nature with whom he would gladly have established a claim to sympathy, which if acknowledged, would amply compensate to him for the indifference of the rest of the world; but here again his evil star seemed to persecute him. He had parted from her in doubt and in darkness, and his present residence not only separated her from him, but placed her in a situation of natural hostility to his wishes.

All this, and much more from which he had in vain endeavoured to extract comfort, had passed through his mind before the waiter interrupted his reverie by bringing supper. “ Beg pardon, Sir,” he said; “ but we’re mortal throng at present with this here election.”

That propriety of deportment which is the peculiar characteristic of the present age, has very much narrowed the field which was open

to former writers, of detailing familiar communications between different ranks. A dramatist of the present day, for instance, is completely debarred from indulging in that alternation of confidence and caning with servants which formed so much of the dialogue and action of the old plays. If a gentleman now-a-days ever does unbend, it is as likely as not with a waiter at an inn, when, for want of other company, he lets himself out for the night for a few shillings' worth of familiarity.

Oakley, generally speaking, was very little likely to give into even this temporary condescension ; but, besides that his own thoughts had not been, as we have seen, very pleasant company, he felt the general, though dangerous desire to which all are subject, to avail himself of an opportunity to hear himself talked over by a person to whom he was unknown.

He therefore detained the waiter, and gave

him an opening to continue the conversation by saying: "I should have thought that here you were quite out of the way of the election, and knew or cared nothing about any of the candidates."

His present attendant was not slow to avail himself of the privilege of talking, though not in the flippant frothy style of a southern knight of the napkin, but with the true deliberate drawl of the north country.

"Lord, sur, there's not a man, woman, or choild in all the country round, but has made a bit of a favourite of one of them; and as for our house, we're no two of a moind here. There's Betty Chambermaid all for Germain, because his colours are prattyest for to look on. Cook's all for ould Squire Stedman, because he's most against the Pope's roasting-alive consarn. As for me, from what I sees in the papers of Squire Oakley's talk, I conceits him

the most, only I doubt its all gammon he says."

"Why so?" enquired Oakley.

"Why, you see, he talks a deal about liberty and natural rights, and that all property is only in trust for the public;—well, he's gotten a mortal foine place, and park, and gardens, such as thare's not the loike in the county, and he wont let a living soul get a soight of it, though master might have five pair of horses out a-day, I dare say, of boithing company from —— going cross country to see it. And much harm that would do. Then, as to economy which he preaches, I doubt he practises that better: it's nothing to me that for certain, for the more as don't dine with him the more may come here. But I am tould that neither man, woman, nor choild, have ever had their trotters under his mahogany."

"Get me some more mutton-chops," said

Oakley, whose pleasure in the conversation had quite ceased. The waiter obediently retired, but to return no more, as the arrival of a carriage-and-four more worthily occupied his attention ; and the fresh mutton-chops were carelessly consigned to Betty Chambermaid, who, flaunting in a cap covered with Germain's ribbons, tossed them upon the table.

Wearied and dissatisfied, Oakley retired early to-bed to prepare for the fatigues of the next day ; but upon coming down in the morning to the sitting-room, where he had been the night before, he found it occupied. Breakfast was already laid, and a lady was standing at the window with her back towards him. He was hastily retiring, when, upon her turning round, to his surprise he beheld Helen Mordaunt.

“ Miss Mordaunt ! and alone ! Can it be possible ? ”

“ Only alone,” said she, “ from too im-

plicit a faith in Lord and Lady Latimer's intention of early rising. I arrived here late last night with them; we had been detained on the road for hours, and therefore could not reach —, where we are going, in order to be more in the way of hearing the news of — of —”

“ Of the election,” added Oakley, observing that she hesitated to mention the subject—“ to be ready to triumph in my final defeat, after seeing me die by inches,”—he continued in a tone that was meant, though not very successfully, for careless banter.

“ Nay, you cannot wish me seriously to defend myself from such an imputation,” she replied, detecting through his assumed pleasantry a little soreness about it. “ Or why should that be the feeling of any of our party? You forget that only one need fail, and I am sure I hope that you will come in with Mr. Germain.”

“ Then, provided he is safe, I may flatter myself that my chance is a matter of indifference to Miss Mordaunt?”

“ You are determined, I see, to misconstrue all I say upon the subject; and as that ignorance I have always professed about it makes it the easier for you to do so, I will say nothing more—but let me take this opportunity of conveying to you my mother’s thanks for all your kindness to me when we met at Boretton. In a letter I lately received from her, she says: ‘ Pray tell Mr. Oakley how much his kindness to my child doubles the obligations I already owe him.’ You know her then, Mr. Oakley, and have perhaps endeavoured to cheer her occasional melancholy, and wondered with me, why she is not as happy as she deserves to be?”

“ And what did Mrs. Mordaunt mean by my particular kindness to you?” inquired Oakley, and for a moment an unworthy suspicion of

the mother's manœuvring for her daughter came across him; but he quickly banished it, as altogether misplaced, and continued: "If it was attempting to monopolize the only society in which I found pleasure, that ought rather to be punished as selfishness, than rewarded with thanks."

In most mouths this would have been a mere common-place compliment; but Oakley could not have said it if he had not thought it; and therefore the whole tone of its delivery was different, coming from him, and its effect might have been proportionate, but that at this moment Lady Latimer opened the door, and beheld, not a little bewildered at seeing that which of all things that had "a local habitation and a name" she least expected—the full length figure of Ernest Oakley.

"I beg your pardon," said he, rather confusedly; "it was quite an unintentional in-

trusion on my part. I was shown into the room last night, and returned to it as a matter of course this morning."

"Pray let us profit by the mistake," graciously replied Lady Latimer, "by your staying to breakfast with us. We will not poison you. Breakfast is a notoriously innocent meal; a dinner is more dangerous, and bears the stamp of party. A cabinet-dinner governs our own country; a public-dinner saves foreign patriots abroad; but breakfast is entirely without meaning, and compromises no man's political principles. So pray sit down."

Oakley, excusing himself on the score of hurry, retreated towards the door, and was met on the threshold by Lord Latimer, ushered in by the waiter, who, turning towards him, informed him that his hat was in the traveller's room. Lord Latimer bowed civilly, looking at first rather puzzled, and afterwards not a little

amused at the waiter's cool treatment of a man of Oakley's character and importance.

When the mistake was explained to him—“A good omen!” said Lord Latimer; “we shall be the means of turning him out of another public house too,” and after that thought no more about it.

Not so Helen—and yet why should each succeeding interview with Oakley have left a stronger impression upon her? All that he had ever said would hardly amount to an avowal of common-place interest, and yet she felt assured that common-place was not the characteristic of his conduct towards her. Hers was no singular case. If nothing has been here recorded to justify that conviction on her part, it is because it is impossible to try by the test of words that which purposely avoids the responsibility of speech, those thousand little nameless attentions which too often by implying attachment create it in .

return; whilst, shunning verbal explanation, they evade every thing of the compromising nature of an engagement.

Oakley's conduct, such as it was, had such an effect; though I am far from asserting that it originated in such an intention.

CHAPTER XIV.

Cry the man mercy ; love him, take his offer.

SHAKSPEARE.

GERMAIN in the mean time proceeded prosperously with his canvass ; to go through all the various duties of this busy time was to him much less of an effort than to Oakley. Some amused him, others gratified his vanity, and as they all were the source of active occupation and excitement, he never felt happier than whilst engaged in them, which feeling enabled him to perform them not only more easily, but more effectually than if he had considered them as a drudgery.

He evidently rather liked riding about with a concourse of followers, and being a great man wherever he went; and even the cry of “German for ever!” with which little blackguard boys strained their tiny throats as he rode through the village, was not altogether an unpleasant sound to him. He was moreover an excellent listener, a first-rate qualification in a candidate; and during the allotted period of each visit, he could sit with a face of intense interest whilst the topics that had been got up for his reception were regularly gone through. It was the same to him whether the subject matter was foreign or domestic—there he sat in silent acquiescence.

He had moreover a ready eye for any thing purposely put up to be admired, whether of furniture or family; and no one had ever the mortification of reflecting after he went away, that any thing done to attract his attention had failed in its object.

He was an amazing favourite with all the young ladies—they hardly knew why. Mr. Oakley was at least as handsome, but it was Mr. Germain who looked as if he thought them handsome.

One of his most active coadjutors in the business of canvassing, was Mr. Macdeed, the celebrated solicitor of ——, who it will be recollected was excessively offended with the reception Oakley gave him after Lord Rockington's death. His zeal therefore had the double incitement of dislike to the rival candidate, and desire to establish himself in the good graces of Lord Latimer, by whom he had been recently employed, in consequence of the talent he had formerly displayed on the other side, in the famous cause of *Rockington v. Latimer*.

The course of their circuit had brought Germain and Mr. Macdeed to a part of the county which the former full well remembered, when

Mr. Maedeer addressed him thus: “ I suppose we may as well just call there, though I am afraid it will be to very little purpose; I have him down in my list—‘ Rev. Mr. Dormer, supposed plumper for Stedman.’ ”

“ I have no doubt you are wrong there,” said Germain; “ Mr. Dormer is an old and very particular friend of mine.”

“ Well, we’ll try,” replied the other, “ but I know he has a most particular horror of ‘ the damnable doctrine.’ It is a pity, Mr. Germain, that you and Lord Latimer could not have made up your mind to some sort of vague ‘ no popery phrases’ in your address; you would have been quite safe then, and I would have undertaken to have so worded it that it need not hereafter have been inconvenient under other circumstances.”

“ It is just as well as it is,” was all that Germain replied, his prudence inducing him to repress the indignation he really felt at the pro-

posal. As they approached Rosedale Rectory, though its general view from a distance was still the same, the details disappointed him. Could that be the stile looking into the lane over which he used to lean with Fanny, and that the green path which led to it, all ending in a muddy puddle? The rector's plantation too was much thinner, and more transparent—why, he was sure one never used to see the pig-stye through it. As they rode up to the door, they passed his study-window and the little garden beneath where he used to see Fanny day after day watering the roses—they had been succeeded by cabbages. This rather touched him—perhaps she had never sought the spot since his departure.

“ Poor Fanny!” thought he, “ how glad she will be to see me again!”

They were ushered in. Mr. Dormer had walked out into the village, yet Fanny was not

alone. They found with her, in what was commonly called the parlour, a short thick-set man, about forty, with rather a bilious tinge, and a bald head and immense whiskers; it would have been impossible to guess at his profession from his dress, for while a new bright-green single-breasted jacket with brass buttons looked rural, a stiff black stock seemed military, while sundry spots of ink upon pale shrunk nankeen trowsers indicated connexion with the counter.

Fanny's cheeks once more rivalled in brilliancy those less congenial spots which in colour had lately eclipsed them, as she advanced to meet Germain, and introduced him to Captain Wilcox, saying at the same time that her father would soon return.

"Won't you please to be seated? Pray take a chair, gentlemen," said the captain.

Germain bowed assent, saying to himself, "And who, I wonder, are you? I should think

I might make myself at home here without asking your leave."

He recalled the whole line of cousins he had ever heard either Mr. or Miss Dormer lay claim to, and though it had been a topic of rather frequent recurrence, he could not recollect the name of Wilcox amongst the number.

"Seasonable weather," said Fanny to Mr. Macdeed, on one side of the table.

"Unseasonable weather," said Captain Wilcox to Mr. Germain on the other; and they had only both just assented to these contradictory propositions, when Mr. Dormer himself returned, and after shaking hands cordially with Germain, thus addressed Mr. Macdeed: "Mr. Macdeed, I presume; busy time, Mr. Macdeed."

A whisper then passed between him and Fanny, accompanied by the consignment of a key, which led to an immediate jingling of glasses in a corner cupboard in the next room,

and to more ostensible effects in a later period of the visit.

Mr. Dormer then drew his chair towards Germain's, and after hemming to clear his voice began: "Mr. Germain, as you are a candidate on your canvass, perhaps it is not too much to presume that it is the object of your visit to request my vote?"

Germain having assented in a few words about the gratifying support of an old friend, and Mr. Macdeed having contrived to edge in "the important point in their favour that it would be," Mr. Dormer resumed:—

"It is my maxim—I may be wrong—that a conscientious man should always act according to his conscience."

After allowing a pause for contradiction he continued:—

"A public trust can hardly be said to mean private advantage."

Another pause, producing acquiescence.

“ Those who are most attached to our invaluable constitution, would not wish to destroy it.”

“ Certainly,” said Germain.

“ Undoubtedly,” added Mr. Macdeed.

“ Of all our establishments those which partake of a holy character, ought to be the most sacred.”

Still there seemed to Germain to be no room for dispute, though he remembered enough of the illogical nature of his good friend’s mind, to know that he disdained the regular steps of reasoning, and that after piling up these disjointed scraps of truism till he had sufficiently exalted himself, he would jump at once to his conclusion, however far he might appear from it. And so it turned out; for after stringing together a few more such sentences—without allowing Germain the opportunity he wished

for, of protesting that he yielded to no man in attachment to the Church of England, and that he thought he best supported its interests, and maintained its integrity, by removing from it the stigma of intolerance—he announced his intended support of Stedman as the Protestant champion.

“ But,” added he, “ I should only half discharge my duty, if I did not recollect that I have another vote.”

“ To be sure you would,” said Germain.

“ That’s the point at issue, my good friend,” said Mr. Macdeed.

“ And I am happy to say, Mr. Germain, that my public duties, and my personal feelings here coincide in inducing me to give the preference to you over your competitor.”

Germain expressed himself properly on the subject, but somehow he did not feel as grateful as he ought. It was not only that he would

have preferred Oakley to Stedman, and therefore was not quite satisfied, but somehow he had calculated upon being the first object with Mr. Dormer. He could not help thinking, that his old friend used not to be quite so great a twaddler.

“ Mr. Dormer has spoken my sentiments too, to a T,” said Captain Wilcox.

“ And what right,” thought Germain, “ can you have to any sentiments on the subject?”

“ You are put up, I believe, by Lord Latimer, sir,” continued the captain; “ I should be very happy to oblige his lordship, he spoke so handsomely of our Indian army, in seconding the address in the House of Lords a few years ago. I remember the circumstance, because a friend of mine, at the mess, objected to an expression of his lordship’s, that that army *ran* second to none on the field of glory. ‘ Ran,’ said my friend, ‘ is an odd compliment,’ but I

explained that it was a metaphor borrowed from his lordship's sporting pursuits, and accompanied by many other favourable expressions."

Though the offensive and unconstitutional phrase, "put up by Lord Latimer," was somewhat explained by the long residence in India afterwards admitted, which might account for ignorance on such a subject, yet Germain felt inclined to be angry at his talking at all about it, when Mr. Macdeed skilfully whispered to him: "Just bought a property in the county, (I remember now,) commanding twenty votes."

Germain immediately replied, that he should be happy to take an opportunity of introducing him personally to Lord Latimer, to whose merits he did no more than justice.

Still he felt puzzled to account for the relation in which he stood to Mr. Dormer. For upon the entry of a tray, with wine and cakes, he it was who undertook to do the honours of

Mr. Dormer's old port, to which Mr. Macdeed seemed inclined to do even more justice than canvassing civility required ; Mr. Dormer, helping himself to a glass, said : " Church and King, Mr. Macdeed ; I am sure you would not wish to separate them."

" Only inasmuch as I should prefer two glasses of your port to one," replied Mr. Macdeed, chuckling at his own smartness.

In the meantime Fanny, addressing Germain, said : " Perhaps, Mr. Germain, you think that we know nothing here of your electioneering bustle, but a friend of mine sent me one of the hand-bills about you all yesterday, in which I hope that the omen of your success may be more true than the idea of your character is just."

It was as pointless, and at the same time, as personal as political squibs upon such occasions usually are. It was called, " Effervescent

Draught for the County." Oakley was described as the acid, Stedman as the alkali, and Germain the froth which the collision of the other two would make to float at the top.

But if it had been a much more poignant production, the contents of that paper would have then had no effect upon Germain, for the envelope that had just been given to him by Fanny was directed to "Mrs. Captain Wilcox!"

Mrs. Captain Wilcox! was it possible that Fanny Dormer, whose taste had once been so refined, whose young heart had once shown a proper sensibility to his merits, should ever have consented to become Mrs. Captain Wilcox? It was not for himself he cared. It was evident last time they met, that he had completely outgrown any remains of his former weakness, but he could not bear that one who had once shown a discriminating preference for better things, should have been so perverted.

But Germain was wrong. Captain Wilcox was essentially a vulgar man; but that which offended Germain at the first glance, appeared to Mr. Dormer and his daughter, the manner of a man who had lived in the world, and his vulgarity once overlooked, he had many redeeming points; he was indeed, as Mr. Dormer always confided to every body soon after introducing him, "a most worthy man, the captain." He had realized a fair fortune by his prudence in the East, without suffering either in liver or character, and was now prepared to spend his money comfortably in his own county.

As a useful assistant in such a scheme, he had made up to Fanny Dormer, whom he met among the sea-bathers at —, soon after Germain had left that watering-place. The courtship was concise but effectual. They had been married soon after their return to Rosedale, an event that had escaped Germain's notice dur-

ing his agreeable sojourn at Boretton Hall. They were likely, till the captain's new house was built, to continue their residence at the rectory ; and the afternoon flow of the rector's old port was not a little helped by his own somewhat soporific anecdotes of the trout-fishing in his own stream, being now interspersed with the captain's tales of tiger-hunting on the banks of the Ganges.

Mr. Dormer accompanying Germain to the outer door, took that opportunity of saying : “ You have not yet congratulated me upon your old friend Fanny's happiness—a most worthy man, the captain.”

“ So he seems,” said Germain, without exactly reflecting how a man seems “ most worthy” in a short morning visit. Any other equally sincere expressions on the subject, were prevented by Fanny herself following them to the door ; and there she stood on the same threshold

where, in former times, she had bounded forward to meet his return, while springy seventeen gave elasticity to her already well-rounded form, and the coming breeze which played among her careless locks disclosed the whole contour of her fine open countenance, and the glad smile of welcome just parted her ruby lips enough to show the dazzling whiteness of her teeth. Now, as Germain took a parting glance in riding from the door, he only thought “What a figure she will have by the time she is the mother of half-a-dozen little Wilcoxes!

CHAPTER XV.

There shall be no money; all shall eat and drink on my score; and I will apparel them all in one livery, that they may agree like brothers, and worship me their lord.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE day of election at length arrived, and all the parties attended at the appointed place, each confidently anticipating a successful result. Of Oakley and Germain the reader already knows rather more than most electors do of their candidates; but Mr. Stedman requires some further notice, and as he was not a man ever to say much for himself, something must be said for him.

He was, perhaps, the most inveterately silent man that ever was sent to assist in a deliberative assembly ; true, as the county member, he was called upon between four and five o'clock to take a great deal of walking exercise, in conveying petitions and bills from one part of the House to another, but the moment public business commenced, he became as stationary as the pillars against which he leaned, and thus he sat in sleepy silence, scorning to speak, equally disdaining to listen. So determined an enemy was he to the principles of free trade, that having brought a certain stock of home-made ideas with him into the House, he bonded them up, equally prohibiting his tongue to circulate those, or his ears to import others. Every progressive improvement he viewed separately, as if arising abruptly out of a state of things that existed forty years ago, and therefore, no doubt, considering it as an uncalled

for innovation, met it with a decided, though not expressive negative. He had a sovereign contempt for his late colleague, Mr. Medium, who, without attending much more acutely to the march of events, wished to be thought to have his own ideas about it, and therefore was constantly and unaccountably trimming backwards and forwards.

Mr. Stedman was of course supported by all that numerous class, who, content with the security of their own selfish comforts, avoid even thinking of the grievances of others, lest an attempt to relieve them (for any thing they know to the contrary) might diminish the value of the peculiar advantages they now enjoy. Oakley, on the other hand, was supported by all those with whom innovation and improvement are synonymous. Germain was upheld by many mixed motives, though none perhaps actuating such large bodies as the other two.

And now from every side were crowding into the county-town immense bodies of those to whom was committed the exercise of an Englishman's proudest boast—the elective franchise. Most of them had, according to immemorial custom, been clearing their intellects for a free choice by unlimited potations at the cost of one or other of the candidates.

Here on one side, as far as the eye could reach, stretched a long line of the "true blues," bearing brilliant banners, on which were inscribed, "Stedman and the Constitution!" "Protestant Cause!" "No Popery!" "Church and State!" and many other such "wise saws," which, with other equally valuable appropriations, the high Tories have for some time arrogated to themselves as their property.

On another side were seen equally dense masses, decorated with green ribbons, bearing on their ensigns, "Oakley and Liberty!"

“ Oakley and Reform !” and sundry other more enigmatical watch-words, such as “ Magna Charta !” “ Bill of Rights !” which, as they are brought out well-dusted, and displayed in times either of stagnation or scarcity, are supposed by many who bear them, to mean either “ high wages,” or “ cheap bread.”

Germain’s partizans shone in the brilliancy of their symbolical colouring, but they were terribly in want of an appropriate watch-word, the politics of the party not possessing sufficient force to distil themselves into ardent axioms; “ Germain and Independence !” was therefore singularly enough chosen as the most apposite motto.

There was an interval of a few minutes after the parties had met, before they appeared upon the hustings. Germain took advantage of this opportunity, to advance towards Oakley. “ Though I never received any answer,

Oakley," said he, "to those few lines which I wrote to you, explanatory of my intention of appearing here to-day, yet I can easily attribute any such omission to the sufficiently-engrossing occupation in which we have both since been engaged; and therefore hope that our competition is entirely political, not personal."

"How far it may be at all political, I am at a loss to tell," answered Oakley; "since I can hardly ever remember to have heard you express any political opinions. What personal inducements you may have had I as little know as care."

It was actually very true, as Oakley said, that Germain had never appeared to take any deep interest in politics; nor is this strange, in a young man just of age, to whom no career in that line was yet open, and to whom every other enjoyment of society was still fresh.

"Perhaps you wish," said Germain, good-

humouredly, “ that I had taken some other opportunity to make up lost time as a politician ; but at any rate, when you talk of personal inducement, I hope you acquit me of having wantonly interposed to thwart you ?”

“ In a case entirely between ourselves, if I do not choose to accuse, I can hardly be required to acquit. But see, the sheriff expects us.”

“ Well, you shall not quarrel with me, Oakley, if I can help it, however much you seem to wish it.”

“ I have not the slightest *wish* on the subject,” replied Oakley coldly ; and here the conversation ended.

The business of the day was regularly opened. Mr. Stedman was proposed and seconded in a few words by two gentlemen who seemed, like their principal, to apply their horror of any thing

new even to their speeches, and therefore only repeated the same sentences, which at the last dissolution had been found to produce the desired effect.

Then, amidst much uproar, Squire Stedman presented himself. He had not, as may be imagined, much to say, and therefore it was perhaps an exercise of political candour on the part of his opponents, to take good care so to interrupt him as to keep him standing, hat in hand, the usual length of a speech. For no one could deny that he looked “the Agricultural Interest” to perfection. As a representative of the soil, he carried an acre or two of it upon his boots and leather breeches; a flock of sheep would hardly have sufficed for the ample folds of his cumbrous coat, and the few straggling hairs which the wind shook out of the mass of powder and pomatum with which

his head was amply manured, showed the care and cost at which poor soils should be cultivated.

During the period he thought it necessary to remain standing, whenever a comparative calm occurred, he had recourse to one of the watchwords from his own banners, to appear as if he had been speaking all the while—“Support our invaluable constitution”—loud applause—louder yells—“As in duty bound the Protestant Church”—increased tumult. “Wisdom of our ancestors.”—“Go to them and be d——d,” cried one voice.—“Ax them about spinning-jennies,” cried another.—“They’ve less land on their hands than you have on yours, Squire,” said a third; and amidst enthusiastic applause from his own party, Mr. Stedman retired.

Germain, as the one who had first offered himself upon the present vacancy, was next proposed and seconded by two gentlemen-like

young men who possessed good property in the county, appeared in new French gloves, with which they stroked down their well-brushed hats whilst they made two very neat speeches, of which not one syllable could be heard, but which were, strange to say, very accurately reported in the next county paper.

Germain spoke sensibly, and was heard favourably, but not received enthusiastically ; for moderation in language, though very distinct in character from mediocrity in intellect, is not unlike it in its deadening effects upon the spirits of a crowd ; and he who has one man's head in his face, and two men's elbows in his sides, had rather have his prejudices flattered, and his passions excited, than his reason convinced.

Sir John Boretton had at last, after much doubt and deliberation, been entrusted with the task of proposing Oakley. Lady Boretton had carefully written out for him on the back

of a card the heads of what he was to say, and he had rehearsed it to her surprisingly well, considering all things; but upon the hustings an unexpected dilemma occurred. Sir John could not read without spectacles, and in the confusion and anxiety of the moment, after fumbling unsuccessfully in every pocket, (no very oratorical action,) he could not find them; he muttered a few words, ending in “ Ernest Oakley, esquire,” and cast an imploring look at Lady Boretton, who was posted at a window on the opposite side of the court.

Her ladyship came to his relief, by waving a small green silk flag, a signal which was answered by the cheers of the populace, and the seconder luckily took the opportunity of stepping in before Sir John and taking his place. He was much habituated to this sort of thing, being a master-manufacturer, who dealt in pins

and politics, and talking was part of his trade. He dwelt much upon the merits of his “honourable friend, Mr. Oakley.”

Now, though Oakley was prepared politically to stretch a fraternal hand of fellowship cordially to all his constituents, enough has been seen of him for it to be supposed that there was something grating to his not over-easy nature in the idea of the individual familiarity of Mr. Sims, and though, as the occasion required, he smothered this feeling as far as he could, yet it rather interfered with the freedom with which he commenced his address.

But Oakley was gifted with great natural eloquence : that vehemence of manner, too, which in private often hazarded offence, in public carried conviction of his earnest sincerity, and the modulated intonations of his fine voice alone, seemed to challenge concurrence in his opinions. A fine

burst of natural eloquence, from its mere sound, ensures spontaneous admiration, like the rush of a mountain-torrent, independent either of the course it takes, or of the depth it covers. Many parts of his speech were certainly peculiarly indiscreet in the situation in which he at present stood, as tending personally to exasperate against him, the supporters of each of the other candidates, and therefore being likely to lead to a union which would be very injurious to his interests.

He was particularly severe upon the vehement conduct of some of the clerical partizans of one of the rival candidates, who, he said, “with Christian charity as their motto, and political power as their pursuit, came there to persecute him for refusing to persecute those whose mere doctrinal differences of religion they made the ground of perpetual exclusion here, which he

dared them in the boldest flight of arrogated infallibility to assume, would be the ground of any eternal distinction hereafter."

But as this work is not meant either as a copy or continuation of harangues at public meetings, and as the speeches of the other candidates have not been detailed, neither shall this part of Oakley's, nor the concluding portion, in which he expressed unmingled contempt for the sort of middle line adopted by one of his competitors, who, with neither the curse of ignorance or intemperance, and with sense enough to perceive the right line, had not virtue enough to follow it.

This was certainly not conciliatory. But at the time its effect was rather imposing; it looked like strength, and a superior disregard of adventitious assistance. Upon the show of hands, the decided majorities were for Oakley and Stedman.

A poll was demanded for Germain, and at its close on the first day, the numbers were declared as follow:—

OAKLEY 634

STEDMAN 586

GERMAIN 401

CHAPTER XVI.

1st Officer. How many stand for consulships?

2nd Officer. Three, they say; but 'tis thought of every one Coriolanus will carry it. There have been many great men that have flattered the people, who ne'er loved them; and there be many that they have loved they know not wherefore; so that, if they love they know not why, they hate upon no better ground: therefore, for Coriolanus neither to care whether they love or hate him, manifests the true knowledge he has in their disposition; and out of his noble carelessness, plainly lets them see't.

SHAKSPEARE.

“I HOPE you saw our friend Lady Boretton,” said Fitzalbert, who had come in on horseback from Latimer to see the fun; “there she was, fixed to the spot, but waving about like Daphne upon the turn, green even to the tips of her

fingers. Well, she is a most formidable antagonist ; for if she has not a vote, at least she has a voice. That savage, Oakley—I think he showed very little regard for his former friend in the language he used ; and that too after you had been unnecessarily civil to him in your speech. It would serve him quite right, Germain, and be your best chance of success, if you were to join at once with that Knight of the Plough and Pigtail, Stedman.”

“ To that I have a great objection,” answered Germain ; “ I know Oakley well enough to have a due regard for his intrinsic qualities, and however rough his manner or rugged his temper, I am sure at bottom he has a good heart.”

“ I never knew a disagreeable man who had not, or was not said to have. I should not call a man well dressed because he had an embroidered birth-day suit locked up in his wardrobe—your good heart is not every-day wear ;

it may not come into use above once or twice in a man's life."

“ Well, I know you were never fond of Oakley ; but as to coalescing with Stedman, though I think Oakley's dislike of contradiction and confidence in his own judgment make him a little wild in some of his political opinions, yet I am much nearer agreeing with him than with Stedman.”

“ Oh ! this is a part of the subject upon which you must excuse me ; I look upon the whole affair as little better than a sort of seven years' suicide ; but if you choose to buy that most expensive luxury, the privilege of losing your hunting in the winter and your dinners in the spring, and the pleasure of hearing men speak by the hour whose talk you would not endure by the minute—why I was only endeavouring to gratify your taste, such as it is. So adieu ! Any message to Lady Latimer ?”

Germain returned to his committee-room, cer-

tainly not gratified at the events of the morning, but by no means so much dispirited as might have been expected ; he had at all times a happy knack of seeing every thing in the most favourable point of view, and at any rate he found a sufficiency of occupation for the moment in listening to the various counsels which alternately preponderated in the little conclave, every one in turn seeming to think that they rendered him the most effectual assistance by differing diametrically from the advice of the last speaker.

His party, it must have been observed, was throughout rather of a mixed character. He had the strenuous support of some of the great families of the county ; and as far as personal influence extended, he had made the best possible use of the short period he had been before the public eye, to conciliate and attach people to himself individually, but his best chance of success was to depend upon his being considered as the

“least evil of the two” by one or other of his competitors.

“This will never do,” said Mr. Macdeed, shaking his head despondingly; “we can’t afford to go on feeding the poll with plumpers. It is very well for that purse-proud Oakley, with high sounding principles for those who are not to be bought, and plenty of money for those who are; it is very well for him to stand aloof, but we have neither funds nor faction enough to prosper alone; and as it is plain we shall never get any assistance from the green party, the alternative seems to me obvious.”

Germain’s answer to this was interrupted by the entrance of a figure with blue and red ribbons mixed, who thrust a brown sunburnt hand into his, with “How d’ye do to-day, sir?” Germain immediately recognised Captain Wilcox, and the captain continued: “Is your friend Lord Latimer here, sir?”

“Not exactly,” replied Germain, rather amused at this eastern idea of freedom of election.

“Oh!” said the captain, “I thought he might have been here, backing you up; you see I’ve got on the livery too—blue and red mixed—united service colours, as I call them. I hope they’ll be seen in common to-morrow, and that you’ll contrive between you to keep out that long-winded chap.”

“Won’t you take a chair, Captain Wilcox?” said Mr. Macdeed, who was delighted at the prospect of such a reinforcement to his view of the subject; but Germain was for the present resolute in postponing any consideration of a coalition till after the close of the next day’s poll.

The next day’s poll closed, and left Oakley still at the head, and Germain rather lower in proportion than he had been. There is no species of success for the moment so intoxicating as the temporary elevation of a popular candidate

at a contested election. It was under the excitement of this influence that Oakley spoke on the second day, and to this is to be attributed much of the intemperance and indiscretion, which gave the more offence from assuming the character of contempt for both of his competitors. He who would have scorned to yield his judgment to the arguments of any man, allowed his conduct to be influenced by the unmeaning outcries of the senseless rabble that surrounded the hustings.

Not that those vociferous excitements were either so loud or so general as they had been the day before ; to explain which it is necessary to own that one of Mr. Macdeed's accusations, that of buying suffrages, was quite unfounded as far as regarded Oakley. He was not a man who ever professed a principle which he did not mean to practise. He did not therefore conceive purity of election to mean the purchase of huzzas from thirsty throats in exchange for hogsheads of ale.

His disbursements were confined to what are called strictly legal expenses. The discovery of this fact had its effect upon the degree of enthusiasm with which he was received on the second day. Yet still he was at the head of the poll, and spoke in the full confidence of continuing there till a final happy result of the contest.

In the meantime Fitzalbert had returned, and told Lord Latimer of the difficulty there seemed in so completely detaching Oakley from Germain, as to induce him to throw him overboard and unite with the other; which, as Fitzalbert said, would insure their success.

Lord Latimer was now so regularly worked up by the excitement of the contest, as to think success an affair of the first moment; he had also originally engaged in the affair principally from a dislike of Oakley; he could not bear, therefore, the prospect of defeat from such a cause as consideration for the person, whose

mortification would be rather an additional enjoyment to him: not that he was really an ill-natured person, or that his feelings one way or other would have been very durable, but at the moment he certainly would have thought Oakley's defeat improved the joke. He therefore wrote to Germain earnestly, though good-humouredly, urging him not to throw away the chances in what he justly considered their joint concern.

After this letter was dispatched, and till the event was known, the conversation at Latimer of course rarely diverged from the all-engrossing topic of the election. And as, during the delusion of such a period, there is hardly an imaginable vice of which people will not accuse a rival candidate, it was not to be expected that Oakley would be spoken of in very favourable terms.

There was one there, however, who heard all the disparaging mention of him in silent dissent.

With too much gentleness to dispute, and yet too much character to believe all she heard, the only impression it made upon her mind was, that Lord Latimer, with all his general facility of temper, was prejudiced when thwarted ; that Fitzalbert, with all his pleasantry, would say any thing for the sake of a joke ; and that even Lady Latimer, in whom it pained her to find any fault, was rather more eager about the event of the election than became one of her sex, unconnected as she was with any of the candidates.

“ Can it be,” thought Helen, “ when I hear Mr. Oakley denounced as having adopted level-living opinions, unbefitting his rank in life, from a constitutional impatience of contradiction, a discontented intolerance of an equal, and a purse-proud desire to be the head of his company—can this be the person whose delight it seemed to be to listen with so much interest to the crude, half-formed impressions of an untutored girl,

and to explain (oh, how persuasively!) the errors into which utter ignorance of the world might lead me? I can never believe that selfishness is the actuating ingredient in such a character.”

Helen had certainly some pretty distinct recollections of ebullitions of impatience even to her upon the subject of the election; but the blame of them she was not willing to attribute exclusively to him, and the only light in which she now recollected them was, as proving the excessive eagerness with which he sought a distinction for which she was sure his talents peculiarly fitted him; and the only regret they now enhanced was, that the attainment of that object, so much desired, seemed by no means certain.

Had Helen even been aware of the concurrence of circumstances which first attracted Oakley’s attention towards her, she would not readily have admitted what might have occurred

to those who took a more unfavourable view of his character, that it was perhaps her very dependence upon him, which the selfish abstraction of his nature considered as an additional charm; but, on the contrary, she would gladly have been convinced of what had indeed latterly been the case, that his conduct towards her had been caused by the working of a passion which has immemorially been allowed to soften rugged natures, and to occasion striking incongruities in a man's general character, and his peculiar deportment when under its influence.

When Germain received Lord Latimer's letter, he had just returned from the hustings after the second day's poll, feeling as much exasperated as it was in his nature to feel at the wanton, unprovoked tone of offence which Oakley had again assumed; yet he had been even more disgusted with a few further specimens of combined ignorance and intolerance from some of the

Stedmanites, and in spite of the little personal soreness of the moment, he never could stop to form any comparison between the pleasure he should feel at commencing his public career hand in hand with the friend of his youth, or going into parliament with such a live log tied to him for a colleague as Squire Stedman.

This was not however exactly the alternative he had to decide upon. Lord Latimer's letter put it to him again in a stronger light, that the most probable contingency was that he should himself lose his election. Guy Faux himself, of gunpowder memory, is not more completely a puppet in the hands of the November urchins who set him up, than a candidate at a contested election often is in those of the party which upholds him. This Germain found in the eagerness with which he was now urged to accede to the proposed coalition. There were not precedents wanting for it, even among those most differing

from Mr. Stedman in principles. In contests like the present, individual security, not political consistency, is made the first object. Mr. Macdeed, who had been very active all the morning in attempting to arrange this junction, found Mr. Stedman's party even more anxious for it, for they had at length discovered that that fine old scarlet bugbear, the Pope, had been rather worn out in the course of the last seven years, and as they had nothing to replace him, they were desirous to take any measures to patch up their threadbare pretensions. The event may be anticipated—an exchange of second votes, as far as they had it in their power to arrange it, was determined upon, and the effect was soon apparent.

For though it gave Oakley an additional opening for some fine bursts of indignant declamation, yet at the same time it so far increased the irritability of his temper, as to make him

unintentionally offend some of his most zealous partizans.

Combined too with the limitations which upon principle he had put to the expenses, it caused a visible diminution in his relative strength. After, therefore, an animated but fruitless contest, in which it would be difficult to say whether he had most succeeded in extorting admiration, or provoking hostility, the numbers were declared at the final close of the poll,

GERMAIN 2301

STEDMAN 2254

OAKLEY 1906

CHAPTER XVII.

— — — The fearful time
Cuts off the ceremonious vows of love,
And ample interchange of sweet discourse,
Which so long sunder'd friends should dwell upon.

SHAKSPEARE.

WHILST the contest still continued, Oakley had not felt any despondency at his daily diminishing hopes of success. The reputation of a martyr was one peculiarly suited to his character. It was almost the only distinction which, whilst it elevated him in his own opinion, at the same time fed that distrust of others in which it pleased him to indulge. Whilst he persuaded himself, in

attempting to persuade others, that he was the victim of an unprincipled conspiracy, it is to be doubted whether at the moment he would have exchanged the liberty of expressing his opinion of his opponents in unmeasured terms, for that situation on the poll which would have burdened his tongue with a weight of gratitude, and deprived him of the pleasure of considering himself as a virtuous victim to the ignorance and corruption of the age.

But, as the excitement subsided, other feelings blended themselves with the retrospect. He left the town in Lady Boretton's carriage: her ladyship had been active in her assistance to the very last, and would now, if she had received any encouragement, have been equally ready with her consolations, but Oakley's taciturnity seemed invincible; therefore Lady Boretton, whose busy mind was never unoccupied, entered at once into eager conversation with her literary hanger-on,

who sat opposite, and was soon as far off as the gardens of the Hesperides, discussing their recently-discovered locality. Sir John, who was opposite Oakley, lest he should be expected to say any thing, kept his eyes as intently fixed upon the passing hedges, as if he had been counting the blackberries on them.

Oakley therefore was allowed, undisturbed, the indulgence of his reflections at much greater length than they need be recorded. It is sufficient to say, that every ground of consolation gradually faded away upon further examination. He now felt disposed to doubt the justice, or even the excellence of some of those philippics of which he had not been a little proud, when they found a ready approval in the acclamations of his party. Their effect however still remained to be felt; they had alienated the only person whose friendship he had ever valued, and separated him farther from her who had awakened in

his heart an interest, strong in proportion to the newness of the feeling to him.

He was roused by hearing Lady Boretton say, after a check to their progress, caused by meeting another carriage at a turnpike, “There is Lady Latimer, of course all smiles; and can that possibly be Miss Mordaunt moping in the corner? How that girl is altered since she first came to my house! I can’t think what has come over her; I never saw any thing so melancholy as she looked last time she came into town with Lady Latimer.”

The carriages crossed; no one replied to Lady Boretton’s remark; she therefore returned to her golden-fruited gardens, Sir John to his blackberry-bushes, and Oakley resumed his reverie, which was now somewhat less political than it had originally been. They thus arrived at the first stage where they were to separate; Sir John and Lady Boretton continuing their

route homewards, and Oakley mounting his horse and crossing to Goldsborough. The groom who had come to meet him with the horse, brought with him from thence a packet which otherwise affected his destination.

It was with some surprise that he read a letter from Mrs. Mordaunt to him, in which she stated that she was already under such heavy obligations to him, that she had the less hesitation in applying to him now to extricate her from difficulties of a delicate and distressing nature. Her health had latterly, she said, been breaking rapidly; she had been anxious not to alarm Helen on the subject unnecessarily, till warned by her physician that she had no time to lose. As her daughter's intimacy with Lady Latimer had originated in an accidental occurrence, with which she had herself no concern, she was unwilling now to open a communication with that lady, which might lead to

inquiries, that, for many reasons, she would rather avoid ; and yet she could not bear that her daughter should return to her unprepared to find her much changed since last they parted. She therefore knew not to whom to confide the task of imparting to Helen the painful necessity for her return, unless it was to him from whom she had had no secret, and to whom she owed the double debt of having, by his liberality, given comfort to her latter days, and by his kindness, smoothed her daughter's first entrance into the world.

Oakley's faculties had been so bewildered and exhausted by the excitement under which he had been lately labouring, that he read this letter over several times before he could form any consistent plan for complying with the request it contained. It appeared as if Mrs. Mordaunt had been ignorant of many late circumstances, which made him a peculiarly in-

convenient medium for communicating any thing to Helen whilst under Lord Latimer's roof. And such indeed was the case. Helen could have related nothing to her mother on the subject of the election, except those prejudiced versions of the contest which were perpetually repeated in her hearing at Latimer, and which she was extremely unwilling to believe; she had therefore adopted the alternative of utter silence on that subject, and so completely secluded was Mrs. Mordaunt's mode of life, that she was very unlikely to know any thing about it from any other source.

She therefore had written in the full confidence that Mr. Oakley's intercourse with her daughter was still upon the same easy footing that it had formerly been. Her own early experience of the workings of the heart, and the deductions which, in the calm of her latter days, she had drawn from that experience, lead-

ing her to believe that Helen's comparative omission of Oakley's name in her most recent letters, arose from other causes than either separation or indifference. Not that it ought, therefore, to be supposed that Mrs. Mordaunt had formed any interested scheme for her daughter's advantageous settlement in life, by a union with Oakley, but occasionally, in her solitude, indistinct hopes of that nature would come across her. She had so studied Helen's character, she had so sifted its freedom from the seeds of those errors which had been her own ruin, that when year after year she found it only more "lovely in blossom, rich in fruit," she justly considered that one so perfect as a daughter, would be invaluable as a wife.

True, with bitter humiliation she felt that her own character might be a bar to any connexion of that kind; and to think of her, separated and estranged, was more than she could

bear: but it had long been in her daughter and for her daughter alone she had lived, and for her sake she hoped soon to die.

It was in the prospects which the visit to Lady Latimer seemed to have opened to Helen, that Mrs. Mordaunt found her consolation for the present separation. Lady Latimer had first met Miss Mordaunt at the house of an old governess of hers, who had retired to the same secluded neighbourhood as her mother. She was a very respectable elderly gentlewoman, with whom Lady Latimer kept up an occasional intercourse, in gratitude for some early moral instruction which Lady Flamborough had, as in duty bound, in the first instance, hired her to implant, and afterwards had herself been at some pains to eradicate. This good old lady had taken a great fancy to Miss Mordaunt, and had introduced her to the notice of Lady Latimer, as the orphan-child

of an officer in the army, whose widow lived in that neighbourhood.

But to return to Oakley and the letter. It is to be feared that one of the first reflections that it raised in his mind was, that the death of a person in Mrs. Mordaunt's unfortunate situation would be no disadvantage to Helen ; but he checked the idea, when he recollected the shock her affectionate nature would sustain in the final separation from a mother, from whom she had received nothing but kindness, and of whom she knew nothing but good. Again he cursed this unlucky election, which had laid an embargo upon personal communication at present. How could he, especially after the language he had used about Lord Latimer and his friends, attempt to cross his threshold uninvited and unexpected ?

He sat down determined to write the painful intelligence he had to convey to Miss Mor-

daunt. But he could not satisfy himself with either the style or substance of what he had committed to paper. Besides, what right had he to address Miss Mordaunt at all? Many things, which an additional word or look might explain or soften, at the moment looked abrupt when staring nakedly and unalterably upon paper.

At one time he thought of returning home to Goldsborough and committing to some delegated person the task that had been assigned to himself. But who should be that person? became the next question. Mr. Gardner from his character, would have been peculiarly fitted to undertake it, but he could not think of asking such a favour of him, after parting from him in a temper of suspicion, which did not render it easy to make the next meeting one of unrestrained confidence.

He read the letter again, and it appeared

that something must be decided on speedily. Whilst he was still deliberating, the shades of night thickened around him, and after having made a last ineffectual attempt to finish what he had written by the uncertain fire-light in the little room to which he had retired, he took the sudden resolution of returning himself alone, and under cover of the darkness, (he trusted unobserved,) to the county town where Helen had accompanied Lady Latimer.

“ There at least,” thought he, “ whilst they are occupied with their petty triumph, I can have an opportunity of a few minutes’ private conversation with Miss Mordaunt without trespassing upon Lord Latimer’s hospitality.”

This resolution was no sooner taken than executed, and he was without further delay on horseback, and again, but more rapidly gliding past those hedges of which Sir John had some hours before so accurately examined the de-

tails, but which now appeared, by the uncertain twilight of an autumnal evening, to stalk by in gloomy, gigantic masses, as he galloped between them. He heeded not their threatening shadows, nor the more substantial discomforts of the coming storm, entirely occupied with arranging, as far as the confusion of his ideas would admit, the manner in which he might best break the unwelcome tidings with which he was charged, to one whom he was most unwilling to pain.

The first thing that at all dissipated the deep abstraction in which these thoughts involved him, was soon after entering the town, a sudden and violent start of his horse at a blazing pile which flared across the streets. This appeared to rise out of a cask, which the drunken assemblage who surrounded it, having previously emptied, had now filled with combust-

tibles, and on the top of it was exposed a stuffed figure, which, from its black wig and oratorical attitude, was evidently meant for Oakley himself.

Enraged at the sight, he spurred his horse furiously through the mob, who fled on all sides, scared at the sight, as the lurid glare fell for a moment upon the haggard apparition of him whose image they had just been reviling, but whose actual presence they had seen removed from the town some hours before. In another second he was lost in the thick cloud of smoke which rolled onward the way he went, and it ever after remained an unexplained mystery, what it was the boys saw that night near Tom Smith's rag-yard. Even the old gossip (who, as the first authority in ghost-stories was consulted on the subject) only shook his head, and said, "It was na a canny task to burn a sinfu'

cratur afore his day—there was na tilling wha might com in sim shape or other to thankee for saving of his fuel.”

Meantime Oakley rode on, not much improved in temper by the late incident, and having put up his horse, sought out Lady Latimer's lodging.

CHAPTER XVIII.

What fire is in mine ears? Can this be true?

SHAKSPEARE.

“ AND you never were at a ball before, my dear Helen ?” said Lady Latimer, as they drove into town that day. “ How you will enjoy it, and what a sensation you will create ! Why, it will make that old, rural, dirty Mr. Stedman, dance like Pan himself to have you for a partner.”

“ I hope you won’t be angry at what I am

going to say. But I wish you would excuse my going to this ball to-night. I am delighted to come here, or go any where that procures me the pleasure of being with you, but I can be no resource to you in a ball-room ; and though your kindness endeavours to make me forget my own insignificance, yet at a meeting of this sort, utterly unknown as I am, I cannot help thinking I must be *de trop*—at festivities too, to which I cannot be considered a party.”

“ If a party, not a very friendly one, I am afraid,” said Lady Latimer, smiling. “ Have a care, or I will tell Germain that I fear we have a traitor in the camp, whose wishes were with the fallen. Nay, now you belie my words, for your cheeks are of Germain’s colour, sure enough. But no more excuses for to-night at least ; I will fulfil Macbeth’s threat, and make ‘ the green one red.’ ”

“ Nay, you wrong me if you think I can do

otherwise than rejoice in your success; and I hope that you won't attribute my conduct to any such ingratitude, when I own that so thoroughly was I convinced that I should be in your way to-night, that I have brought no ball-dress with me."

"Nor have I," said Lady Latimer, "so you will be as well off as I am—but wait a little," added she, observing that Helen looked surprised at this declaration.

"Any cases come for me from London?" asked Lady Latimer, upon alighting at her lodging.

"Yes, two," my lady, readily replied the soubrette.

"Now for them, then. There, my dear Helen, did you ever see any thing so beautiful? the colour quite appropriate, all trimmed with the *véritable feu d'enfer*; not those awkward imitations of which one has been

ashamed during the election—both precisely alike you see—this was my little surprise for you; you had no suspicion when I observed how well my dresses fitted you, that I meant to send for this as a little cadeau for you, that we might both appear exactly the same to-night."

There was so much genuine good-nature mixed up with the frivolous importance which Lady Latimer attached to this little affair, that Helen could not bear to disappoint her by refusing to use, on this appropriate occasion, the beautiful dress which she had taken such pains to procure for her.

Lady Latimer having quite made up her mind that there was but one person who could dress both their heads in a manner at all worthy of the occasion, Miss Mordaunt had retired first, and had returned to the drawing-room, her toilette finished, the beautiful dress even exceeding Lady Latimer's expecta-

tions, and her fine hair interspersed with corresponding bows of *feu d'enfer*. She was expecting to have long to await alone the result of her friend's somewhat *soigné* labour, when a bustle was heard in the passage below.

Lady Latimer's servants never did more than was absolutely necessary at home, and upon an occasion like the present, they would have thought it quite out of character to be in the way; therefore it was the soubrette of the house who announced that "a gemman wished to speak to Miss;" and without waiting a reply, ushered Oakley into the room.

It would be hardly possible to imagine a more attractive object than Helen Mordaunt then appeared—a form and features in which were happily blended the brilliant with the delicate; a countenance marked at once with strength of mind and innocence of heart; and all those innate charms enhanced by the efforts

of art, which in this instance had luckily united the correct in fashion with the becoming in taste.

But if, instead, a loathsome and disgusting object had unexpectedly crossed his path, Oakley's countenance, upon beholding it, could not have undergone a more sudden change in expression than when he found her, whom he had come to console and support under affliction, more radiant than ever, decked out, as he thought, insultingly, in his rival's colours. Helen's surprise at first keeping her silent, he began with suppressed emotion : “ The person I see, is so unlike the Miss Mordaunt I expected to find, that I know not how I can sufficiently apologize for my intrusion.”

“ I will not deny that I am indeed much astonished to see you here, and thus—” said she, looking at his splashed and disordered appearance ; “ but from all I have known

of Mr. Oakley, I have no doubt that he has some good reason to give for what indeed—.”

“ All you have known of Mr. Oakley—perhaps you know as little in truth of what Mr. Oakley really is, as he now finds to his cost he knew of Miss Mordaunt. We may have been equally deceived.”

“ This is very strange,” said Helen, alarmed. “ I entreat you to recollect yourself, Mr. Oakley. Lady Latimer will be down presently, and if you have any thing to say, I beg it may be in her presence.”

“ Yes, Lady Latimer—she it is that has wrought this change in you—a cold, unfeeling coquette, who, simply to gratify her vanity would compromise her own character. Why should she respect that of her friend?—she it is that, at a time when you ought to be far otherwise attired, has for her own purposes decked

you out in these trappings of her fickle admirer, the frivolous Germain."

"Whatever Mr. Germain's character may be, it is not for me to defend it; but I must say, that I feel confident his conduct would never have been such as in the last few minutes I have blushed to witness. Oh, for shame, Mr. Oakley!" added she, gathering courage as she proceeded, "if no generous regard for my unprotected situation prevents your forcing upon my unwilling ear erroneous constructions upon my conduct, why should you imagine that I can hear without resentment an unprovoked libel upon the character of my best friend and benefactress, and that too from one who has no claim upon me beyond that of a common acquaintance, and whom gratitude to my protectress, will be sufficient to make me henceforth treat as a stranger."

Helen's feelings had been thoroughly roused by an overpowering sense of injustice; and whilst her eye flashed indignantly upon Oakley with an expression so different from its habitual mildness, the recollection of his uncle's portrait came involuntarily across him. He felt for a moment subdued by the tone she took; but there was much of what she said peculiarly galling to his impetuous disposition in its present fevered state. The unfavourable comparison drawn between himself and Germain, excited a feeling, which combined with the previous ranklings of envy, the additional pang of jealousy. The rejection of him as a stranger, with which she concluded, conspired to overthrow the little command he still had upon himself, and he replied:—

“ What other claims upon your favour I may have foolishly imagined I had established, it is

useless now to inquire, but you may live to feel that the gratitude you profess towards Lady Latimer is as nothing compared to that which you ought to have acknowledged towards me."

"Gratitude to you!—for what? Can you possibly mean to allude to attentions, which it would be as unworthy in you to urge, as degrading to me to admit, as establishing such a claim?—Gratitude to you! I owe you none"

"What!" said Oakley wildly, "—none that I readily cancelled my uncle's tacit rejection of his child—none that I gave to the offspring of shame an honourable position in the world by continuing to your surviving parent the pension of her guilt?"

"Good God, he's mad!" exclaimed Helen, a sudden conviction of that appalling nature coming upon her, from the vehemence of his manner, and the apparent incoherence of what he uttered. She darted by him to the door, and succeeded

in making her escape up stairs. Her first idea was to seek protection in Lady Latimer's apartment, but she hesitated even at the door, from an unwillingness herself to explain and detail, particularly at the present moment, all that had just passed ; she therefore retired to her own room, where she remained some minutes in a deplorable state of agitation. She then heard Oakley, who had made no attempt to follow her, rapidly descending the stairs, and immediately after, the housemaid brought her a letter in her mother's hand directed to Oakley, enclosed in an envelope, in which was scrawled in pencil these few lines :—

“ I can in no way make reparation for what I have done, nor expect you to forgive me, when I can never forgive myself. The enclosed will explain that I came with other intentions than wantonly to insult you, though it will not, and cannot, excuse the brutal perversion of my errand.

May heaven support you under those afflictions, which it is my curse to have aggravated!"

E. O.

The comparative sanity of this note, and the tone of obligation with which she found her mother addressing him, were far from consolatory to Helen; for they opened to her the dreadful suspicion that there was some foundation for the mysterious connexion with Oakley at which he had hinted. This harrowing thought did not however at the moment take much hold upon her mind, as every other idea was superseded for the time by the present calamity which her mother's letter imparted, that she was ill, very ill, and desired her immediate return.

It was with the determination just formed, that her departure should not be delayed another moment, that she was found by Lady Latimer, whose toilet was at length finished, and who entered her room engrossed with the

expectation of that admiration she knew she so well deserved. Helen immediately communicated to her the intelligence she had received of her mother's illness, though she did not add the means by which she had learnt it.

Lady Latimer was much disappointed, and at first attempted to remove the impression of its serious nature, by saying—

“ Oh ! I dare say it is of no consequence ; your fears have exaggerated things ; to-morrow we shall be returning, and then, certainly, if you like, you can go home.”

But upon raising her candle to Helen's face, the desolating effects of agitation she there observed, which had been in no small degree caused by the scene she had undergone, but which Lady Latimer attributed entirely to the news she had received, showed that she was not to be trifled with. She therefore at once offered one of her own carriages and servants to

be immediately ordered to convey Miss Mor-daubt upon her way homewards, if she wished to set off without delay. This having been thankfully accepted, Lady Latimer left the room, saying that she would herself stay at home till every thing was ready, in order that she might see that all possible expedition was used.

Helen immediately commenced, with no small degree of impatience, throwing off the unlucky ball-dress, which had certainly excited any thing but admiration in the only person by whom it had been seen; and soon were scattered negligently about the room, flowers, ribbons, and similar paraphernalia, which would have made the fortune of any milliner, and the happiness of any young lady in the county. Under Lady Latimer's own immediate direction, the preparations for the journey were completed in an incredibly short time, and after a most affectionate

farewell, the two friends separated, Helen to commence her sad and solitary return home-wards, Lady Latimer to gladden the expectant eyes of the brilliant ball-room.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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